





**THE
GRAND MASTER'S
TREASURE**

**BY
GERTRUDE W. SARGENT**



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THIS VOLUME IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED TO
MY GOOD FRIENDS IN THE STATE OF MAINE

“O my friends!

I hear your voices softened by the distance,
And pause, and turn to listen, as each sends
His words of friendship, comfort and assistance.

Thanks for the sympathies that ye have shown!
Thanks for each kindly word, each silent token,
That teaches me, when seeming most alone,
Friends are around us, though no word be spoken.”

—LONGFELLOW.

PREFACE

IN giving to the public this volume, which I am led to believe is the first work of fiction dealing with the principles and members of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, I trust that it will be received in the same spirit in which it was written. "The good of the Order" has been the underlying thought, and my chief desire has been to so bring before the uninitiated something of the spirit of our beloved Order that the world at large may recognize its advantages and uplifting influence, and seek admission. There cannot be too many Odd Fellows and Rebekahs.

On April 30, 1894, I became a Rebekah, and on the same occasion was installed as the first Noble Grand of Riverview Rebekah Lodge, No. 49, I. O. O. F., of Bucksport, Maine; and in the year 1897 I was retired from the office of President of the Rebekah State Assembly. Owing to change of residence, I have been unable to visit the home lodge for several years, but I have ever kept in close touch with it. During this period I have visited many lodges nearer my dwelling place and have been most cordially welcomed.

When I learned that an urgent appeal had been

PREFACE

made for funds with which to build and equip an Odd Fellows' and Orphans' Home in Maine, I determined to do all I could to help, and to this end "The Grand Master's Treasure" was written. I pledge myself to give ten per cent of the net proceeds of the sale of the book to the Home Fund. Gladly would I give all, but being wholly dependent on my own exertions for my livelihood, I must look to the project to help me in my own problem.

I have been encouraged by Frank B. Miller, Grand Master of Maine, and others to believe that the Order throughout its jurisdiction will be glad to further the sale of the book for the sake of all the objects involved. Knowing the kind and generous thought that is the foundation of the Order, I feel confident that my appeal will not be in vain.

The characters in "The Grand Master's Treasure" are drawn wholly from the imagination, and the scenes are composite pictures of fact and fancy.

Gertrude W. Sargent.

THE WARREN,
48 McDonough Street,
Brooklyn, New York,
September, 1911.

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PART FIRST

FRIENDSHIP

“Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul!
Sweet’ner of life! and solder of society!”

ROBERT BLAIR.

THE GRAND MASTER'S TREASURE

CHAPTER I

THE PLACING OF THE TREASURE

AS Mrs. Lawton, better known to the theater-going public as Miss Bettina Germaine, comedienne, approached the ticket office of the little station at Trowbridge Junction, the sound of voices within in earnest conversation arrested her attention. Involuntarily she paused, and woman-like, may I say, listened. The subject certainly appealed to her, for, depositing the child she carried in her arms on the nearest settee along with her suit case, she cautiously retraced her steps to her former position beside the window.

From the tenor of the conversation it was evident that the two men were Odd Fellows, and the subject interesting them was the visit of the Grand Officers of the Order, for the purpose of dedicating the fine new Odd Fellows' Hall in the town five miles away.

"Didn't you get over, George? I thought sure you would be there, and Sarah too," said the station agent, his back toward the window.

"No," replied the other, "I couldn't get off; but Sarah went. Nothing could keep her back. She'd have gone if it had been midwinter and she'd had to walk every step of the way knee-deep in snow. She was on the supper committee, you know. Sometimes I wonder how we could ever get along without the Rebekahs."

"I don't waste my time that way," laughed the agent. "But don't you run away with the idea that I don't appreciate all that the Rebekah Order means to Odd Fellowship. To my mind it's the leaven of the whole lump. The new Grand Master has made a fine impression, especially on the sisters, and they are determined, so they say, to make this year a record breaker."

"He's a married man, ain't he?" inquired his friend.

The agent tipped his hat to one side and chuckled.

"Married? Well, I guess not. Why, you know who he is? Richard Denman, lives down Norwood way in that big place on the river road, 'Ledgelawn' they call it."

"Can't say I do remember; you forget I've been away, off and on, for the best part of five years, and not until Sarah got the Rebekah 'bee in her bonnet' did I ever give much thought to lodge except to keep my dues paid up. Seems to me I've heard he was a lawyer."

"That's the man. His father was Judge Den-

man, and I tell you he was a corker if there ever was one! Great tall man with an eye that looked straight through you. My father used to say that the old Judge was a lawyer that could tell a lie but was so darned obstinate he wouldn't. Think of that!" And they laughed noisily.

"Yes, 'Dick,' as the boys call him, took the practice when the old man died eight years ago. He was a young fellow just out of law school, full of the devil but straight as a string. He settled right down and is making a name for himself, so I hear."

"How old is he?"

The agent frowned deeply, and ruminated. "Let me see," he murmured. "The Judge went to Californy when I was a baby, so I've heard father tell, and a few years after," he paused, then the thought coming clearer, said with emphasis, "Now, I have it. Kate was born when I was five, and that was the very year Judge Denman brought his wife home. She was a 'Frisco girl, and he married her out there. Handsome woman, is so now. The Grand Master comes rightly by his good looks. Now, I'm five years older than Kate, and I've heard her say that she was five years older than Dick Denman. Oh, he's about thirty-two or three."

His companion got up and looked at the clock from the ticket window and remained leaning on its wide ledge.

"Has he been up yet?"

"Why, what are you thinking of, man? He, leave before six and miss the fine supper the Bekies had prepared? Not he! He'll be along in time for the 9.15 all right. His mother has only the colored help in the house, and like a good son he always tries to get back home at night whenever he can make it. I tell you, he's all right. Want to meet him, George?"

The other turned as if to go, saying, "Not to-night. I've got to get up early to-morrow. Going up Aroostook way." Then, lowering his voice, "Somebody wants a ticket, I guess."

In her eagerness to hear all that was being said, Bettina Lawton had moved into the light and the man saw her profile clearly outlined by the window. The agent sprang quickly to his feet, opened the window and looked out. Mrs. Lawton advanced.

"Boston, please," she said. On coming to the station it had been her intention to buy a through ticket to her destination, New York, but the conversation she had just listened to had started a train of thought, visionary, yet probable, and it might be well for her to dissemble. Boston was the end of the Pullman run, and her section had been engaged by mail two days ago, so, quite naturally, Boston suggested itself as the better place for the train ticket.

The ticket duly stamped and change given, the agent turned his attention to his departing guest.

Returning to her charge, Mrs. Lawton quickly removed the child to the farthest and darkest part of the dimly lighted station. The screen behind the big stove quite hid them from view. She watched the men as they emerged from the ticket office and left the waiting room. It was then five minutes to nine o'clock. The Boston express was due at 9.06 and the agent had said that the Grand Master would leave on the up train at 9.15. If she carried out the mad plan that had suggested itself to her mind, there was no time to be lost. "An Odd Fellow," she kept saying to herself. There lay her right of appeal, but how in the world was she ever going to do it? Her thoughts were in a tumult. She could not ask him to take the child; that would be an insane idea; he had never even heard of her. He would refuse undoubtedly, and no wonder. She could not expect anyone unless made acquainted with all the circumstances to give the thing any consideration. Oh, for a home, a home! Never before had it meant so much to her anxious thought. It had always been the one great desire of her heart for the baby's sake.

"Only the mother and son, servants, and a big house. What a home for some little child," she said, half aloud. If Miriam could only be placed amid such surroundings as those in which the agent said the Grand Master lived! Miriam was a good child, healthy, sweet tempered, and very

bright. Nurse Graham had brought her up so carefully, surely they could not help but love her, and it might not be for long. Another season she would drop musical comedy and get into some resident stock company, then she could make a home for the little one. The more she thought of it the stronger became her conviction that she was right in indulging in such fancies. Taking the child to New York, even if she hired an apartment and a competent nurse, what should she do when the company went on the road, as very likely it might in the spring? She closed her eyes and tried to steady her thought. She dared not look at the little one, she must be unselfish and do whatever seemed best for her darling. If it were right that she should do the thing she contemplated the way would be made clear to her. It always had been in the past, it would be so now. The Red Sea of Doubt would surely open and a path be shown her through which to take her child to safety. There was no need to worry, there was no cause for fear, she must be obedient to Divine Love and the mists of doubt would lift.

A gust of wind struck her fevered cheek. She opened her eyes and peered around the side of the screen. Two men were entering the waiting room. The first was a tall young man with a military bearing. He carried a fur-lined coat on his arm and a suit case in his hand. The other man was stouter, and wore eyeglasses. Both were talk-

ing with the agent, who hurried in after them and unlocked the ticket office.

"Joe," said the taller man, addressing the agent, "I'm going to leave my coat and suit case here, if convenient?" He laid the garment over the chair and deposited the case beside it.

"Sure, Brother Denman, pleased to have you. They'll be perfectly safe. There ain't a soul here as I can see, except yourselves for the up train. She'll be a few minutes late to-night, I hear."

They moved toward the outer door. The Grand Master turned to address his companion. Bettina could see him distinctly. A fine, high-bred face, clean shaven, and a figure slender yet athletic in build. He was consulting his watch.

"We'll have ample time to go to the drug store, won't we, Joe?" he said. "I want to get some stamps for letters to send off by the express."

"You'll have ten minutes, sure," replied the agent, and the three passed out, closing the door.

Mrs. Lawton's brow cleared. So that was the Grand Master of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows of Maine. What a musical voice he had, a barytone, she thought. His entire personality was intrinsically that of a man born and bred to the best things of life. She was trembling with excitement. The way had opened as clear as noonday, so it appeared to her rapidly clearing mentality. If what she had in her mind was the thing to do, it must be done quickly. In an instant she had a

pencil and pad of paper from her case and was rapidly writing a note. With shaking hands she pinned it to the little white coat. Then lifting the child carefully, she bore her swiftly to the ticket office, pushed open the door, and placed the little one in the warm folds of the Grand Master's coat. At that very instant the express came thundering in. A light kiss on the dimpled cheek, a murmured blessing, "Love be kind to her," and snatching up her suit case she fairly flew out of the waiting room and onto the platform just as the conductor was swinging his lantern and calling, "All aboard!"

She was so shaken with agitation, she had hardly strength enough to lift her suit case to the step of the car. The conductor, an elderly man with grown-up girls at home, divining her condition, laid his hand on her arm steadying her as she climbed the steps.

"Better not reckon so close another time," he said, not unkindly, as taking her luggage he deposited it on a seat midway of the car. Thanking him, she sank down and shut her eyes only to open them wide as she recalled her section in the Pullman, the car ahead. Rousing herself she made her way into the sleeper. The porter, with observation keen for beauty as well as for tips, graciously relieved her of her luggage.

"Yes, lady," he replied. "Your section is No. 8, lower berth, Miss Germaine? Yes, Miss, I'll

make it up right away." Absently she paid the fare, then glanced about her. The train was a heavy one. A large party of tourists back from a hunting trip to the Aroostook came in from the smoker, and began preparations for retiring, laughing and joking with each other and the porter. Waving his hand toward her section, the porter signified its readiness to receive her.

How good it seemed to be alone at last! She snuggled down under the warm coverings and vainly tried to compose herself. Usually she could sleep on the train no matter how much noise there might be about her, but to-night her nerves were so overwrought by the exciting events of the day that every burst of hilarity made her start. It was an audacious thing she had just done. She believed that her impulse was right, but would her precious baby be safe? The face of the Grand Master, with its grave but sweet expression, came before her and the recollection of it gave her some degree of comfort. Ah, but she was so homesick for the little form she had been holding in her arms! Her baby among strangers! *Strangers!* The words pounded themselves in upon her brain. Yet, her almost childlike faith in the power of Divine Love "to temper the wind to the shorn lamb" brought to her a sense of peace. It had been her strong belief that the God she looked to daily for guidance would direct her in all her ways,

and in spite of her fears she felt she had made no mistake in placing her treasure in the Grand Master's care. Little by little she grew calmer, the tense strain lifted, and like a tired child she relaxed and slept.

CHAPTER II

THE FINDING OF THE TREASURE

THE station agent, whistling merrily, busied himself with the packages and bundles left by the express, until the voice of the Grand Marshal recalled the fact that the train was even later than he had expected.

"Usually right on time, eh, Joe?" said Micah Hayden, as he lit another cigar and watched the smoke float out on the clear frosty air; then realizing that he had forgotten something he drew some cigars from his inner pocket and passed them to the agent.

"Much obliged, Brother Hayden, I never smoke on the job, but it will be a treat, I can tell you, when I get home." He had noticed the brand, the choicest the drug store afforded, and could truly say the cigars would be a treat.

"Doesn't he smoke?" he asked, nodding in the direction of the Grand Master, who was standing somewhat apart, hands deep in his pockets, face turned skyward, studying the aurora borealis, which was unusually bright.

The Grand Marshal smiled. He never wearied

of recounting the splendid qualities of his boyhood friend, even at the sacrifice of his own virtues.

"Richard Denman has no vices," he replied, knocking the ashes from his cigar. "He is, without exception, the best all-round example of an Odd Fellow I ever knew, old or young. And he's certainly no mollicoddle." He recalled the many occasions of various kinds and descriptions in which he and Richard Denman had participated. They were chums at college, and afterwards during Dick's years at law school, when he had served his time as reporter on the staff of a newspaper in the same city, they had been inseparable. Yes, he felt he knew his friend pretty thoroughly. If Richard Denman had any shortcomings Micah Hayden would be likely to know of them.

He regarded the Grand Master affectionately and thought of Theo, his sister, the playmate and companion of both men. Some day perhaps a marriage would unite the families in a closer bond. He walked to the Grand Master's side and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Why so pensive, Dickie, my boy?" he asked, throwing away the stump of his cigar. He knew Richard only tolerated cigar smoke because he loved him. "You've been gazing heavenward for at least five minutes. Got a crick in your neck?"

A smile, quickly fading, flickered on the Grand Master's lips:

"I was thinking, Micah, how little the great majority of men, and women too, who take upon themselves the obligations of the degrees of Odd Fellowship, realize the infinite significance that lies in the work. Why, it means utter self-immolation, the living up to one's highest ideals, or at least striving to do so. Now about the dedication to-day; how many do you think really understood what it all meant?" He looked about him apprehensively and walked a few steps. "I'm not superstitious as you know, Micah, but I can't shake off the feeling that something out of the ordinary is going to happen."

Micah slipped his arm in his and laughed.

"Dickie, your liver is out of order. Better take a pill. I see you are getting a trifle morbid; sure sign of a disordered liver. Any patent medicine almanac will tell you that. But, by Jove, I don't wonder, when I think of the banquets we've feasted at the past five weeks. And the one to-night! Fit for the gods! Ah, Rebekah, Rebekah, thy name is all that bespeaks hospitality! The memory of thy chicken salad will never die, even if we do! Cheer up, Dick, and don't forget the pill!"

A shrill whistle sounded, the headlight of the engine could be seen as it flashed around the curve below the crossing. The agent started for the waiting room.

"We'll get the things, Joe," called out the Grand

Master as he hastened along the platform. He dashed into the ticket office and took hold of his coat. What was the matter? Was it weighted down? Had some one been playing a joke on him? Surely not.

He threw open the folds of the garment to investigate, and there, deep in sleep, lay the rosiest, prettiest little child he ever had looked upon. He started back and stared. "Great Scott!" he ejaculated. Then, accustomed to quick action, he called out as he ran to the door, "Joe, hold the train! Something here to investigate! Micah, here!"

Both men came in on the double-quick, followed by the conductor. They stood transfixed with surprise. The conductor lifted his lantern so the rays fell full on the waxen features. The agent's face flushed, then turned deadly white.

"Well, I'll be switched! Excuse me, Mr. Denman, but this is as big a surprise to me as it is to you. I never set eyes on that kid before, and I don't know a living thing about how it came in here, on my honor." He pushed back his cap and wiped the moisture from his forehead.

The conductor looked at his watch and fidgeted.

"Well, well, I guess this is a greater surprise than that collie dog you took home a few weeks ago, Mr. Denman," and he laughed infectiously. "But for all that, I can't hold this train a minute longer even for you. What are you going to do?"

and he looked at the Grand Master and then at Micah Hayden, who was regarding his friend intently. It seemed as if Richard Denman was completely lost to everything about him.

"What are you going to do, Dick?" echoed Micah sharply, shaking him by the arm.

The Grand Master looked up from the child's face to the three anxious men before him. He lifted the little one tenderly and wrapped the coat closer.

"What am I going to do?" he answered, as he stepped out of the ticket office. "There is only one thing to do as I regard it, for to-night at least. I'm not going to desert what has been placed almost literally in my very arms."

The conductor gave a grunt of satisfaction and relief. In a moment more he waved his lantern to the engineer leaning out of the window of his caboose. The train started.

"I'll telephone you early to-morrow, Joe, how to investigate this," called out the Grand Master from the vestibule of the car. "Don't worry about it. I know you're not to blame. Good night!" And he passed within the car. Micah had preceded him and turned over a seat for the Grand Master's burden.

The two men sank back in their places and silently dwelt on the situation confronting them. Fortunately there were few passengers aboard

and no one they knew. It was some moments before the silence was broken, then Micah said:

"Well, Dick, this is certainly the limit, believe me! I wonder what the solution will be. It will be a regular scoop if you don't mind my wiring it to the press to-night. If it was almost any other man but you, I'd think—" he hesitated and his face grew red to the roots of his thick brown hair. He took off his glasses and nervously rubbed them with his pocket handkerchief. The whole thing was so unpleasantly unusual.

The Grand Master turned slightly and looked him full in the eyes; there was no shadow of resentment in his gaze. He knew his record was without spot or blemish and he knew Micah knew. It had just occurred to him that this was the explanation of his peculiar feelings. The "something" had certainly happened. Clearing his throat he said:

"Micah, it is needless for me to tell you that this little child is as much of a stranger to me as she is to you. For the present it is all very mysterious." He took off his hat and ran his fingers through his hair, the lines between his brows deepening. The child nestled in her sleep and murmured some inarticulate words. "I don't see how," he continued, lowering his voice to a whisper, "in the name of all that Odd Fellowship stands for, I could do differently from what I am doing. Until it is proven that the child

has parents living, she is virtually an orphan, and it is our duty to protect her. I'd do it anyway," he added *sotto voce*. From the moment he had taken the child in his arms, those words spoken centuries ago by the grandest Master that ever trod the earth had been ringing in his ears, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Richard Denman could not have been called a religious man according to the worldly standard. His early training had been strict but not according to any prescribed religious codes.

The family pew in the Congregational Church, the first house of God erected in Norwood, had been in possession of the Denman family for years. The ministers had always been welcome visitors to Ledge-lawn, and the family were liberal in their gifts to the church. They seldom attended service, however, except on special occasions such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the Easter celebration. From earliest childhood Richard had been taught to be kind to all of God's creatures because He made them, and to know that all His creation was good; to fear to do evil because it was unmanly, beneath his heritage, and to love his neighbor as himself.

And so it came to pass that, when on attaining his majority, his parents suggested that he should unite with the Subordinate and Rebekah Lodges of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in the

town of Norwood, the son found in these an active outlet for his ideals. Following in his father's footsteps, Richard filled the office of Noble Grand in due course of time, and in the month of October of the year this story opens he had been elevated to the highest office of the Order in the State of Maine. His brother Odd Fellows knew that he was one who never hesitated to do what he felt was right, no matter what appearances would seem to indicate, and the present instance was no exception.

He fell to studying the sleeping form, the little arms thrown over her head in all the abandon of childhood. What was that apparently pinned to the side of her coat? A note? His seat-mate pointed to it simultaneously with his leaning over to investigate. Yes, it was a note. He took out the small white pearl-headed pin, carefully attaching it to the under lapel of his coat, and together the two men read these words:

"Miriam's father was an Odd Fellow in good standing. The mother is leaving her child in your care knowing that you will protect the helpless. Some time she will come to claim her daughter and to express her gratitude. Miriam will be three years old on November twentieth.

"B. L."

"A case of impulsive desertion. I wonder what is the best way to go about the matter? Surely

Joe must remember some clew when he gets to thinking rationally. Do you recall seeing anyone about the station, Micah?" he asked as he studied the handwriting, which was distinctly that of an educated person. There was no attempt to disguise the hand. It had marked characteristics which could be easily traced if the occasion presented itself. Micah waited until the brakeman had passed, then whispered:

"Yes, by Jove, I did, come to think of it. I saw a young lady get on the express at the last moment and Stanton swung on behind her. Why didn't I think of that before! What a jackass I am! There's your baby's mother, Dick, beyond a doubt," he declared emphatically.

"Of course you didn't notice anything about her so you could recognize her if you saw her again?" eagerly questioned the Grand Master.

Micah shook his head. "She had gone in the car as the train passed me, but Stanton may know who she is. I'll ask him to-morrow when he comes up. B. L. B. L.," he repeated. "Why, Dick, if she happened to take the sleeper, Mack will be able to place those initials, it was his run to-night."

"Right you are!" returned the Grand Master excitedly; "I'll put Joe wise in the morning. You see, I'd like to have the mother know her child is safe. She took desperate chances. Micah, she must have been somewhere in the station when we were. It's strange we didn't see anyone. It's a

mystery to me how she did it. Joe ought to remember something, seems to me."

"Poor old Joe was completely knocked out," laughed Micah. "It would have been laughable if the situation hadn't been such a serious one. He'll get nerved up again after he smokes one of those cigars." Then they fell to discussing ways and means toward the desired end, that of locating the mother and assuring her of the safety of her child.

"Of course we will keep the little girl, for the present at least," said the Grand Master. Then he added, "Micah, do you realize that in this very case the necessity for an orphans' home is apparent? Now if we had such an institution we would know just where to take her. The lodges should be aroused to greater activity in that direction. Because we have no indigent Odd Fellows and homeless orphans at present, it does not follow that such will always be the prevailing condition."

The train was moving at a tremendous rate. If the engineer kept up the speed the lights of Norwood would soon be seen glimmering in the distance.

"Why, here we are now!" exclaimed the Grand Marshal, as the train lurched round a curve and suddenly came to a standstill. "I'd no idea we were so near home," and he caught up the suit case preparatory to leaving. "Be careful how you handle that baby, Dick, she might wake up

and then—" Richard Denman smiled back at his friend. The situation had its humorous side if one looked for it. They walked briskly along the platform. The town clock was striking eleven.

"If the station cab isn't here, telephone for a carriage, Micah, we can't walk home to-night!" and they both burst into a fit of laughter which was quickly checked however. Hayden went to the corner of the station and peered into the darkness. The public conveyance could be seen coming along the main street, the driver whipping his horses into the semblance of a trot. In a few moments he drew up to the platform beside the passengers.

"That's you, Mr. Hayden, ain't it?" he inquired, as he turned in his seat to reach the handle of the carriage door. Recognizing Mr. Denman he nodded, and looked with curiosity at him, as he handed the child to Micah before entering the carriage.

"I'm bringing home a visitor, Tom," he said by way of explanation.

The old man's eyes twinkled, he had known both men from the time they were in knickerbockers and used to steal rides on the back of his carriages.

"I thought you'd have to find somethin' for that yaller dog to play with. He's the friskiest anermile I ever see. Likes to bark all right," and he gathered up the reins. "There's extry covers

under the seat. Better wrap that child up. It's down to freezing by mornin' or I miss my guess." And they started off on the last part of the journey neither would ever forget to the end of his life.

"What do you suppose the Madam will say, Dickie?" asked Micah suddenly. "She was delighted with the coming of the collie; but this is a slightly different proposition. What do you think?" and he gave his arm a reassuring pat.

Richard looked out of the window; it was some time before he attempted to reply.

"To tell you the truth, Micah, I hadn't thought of it. Oh, mother will feel as we do after she knows all the circumstances. There was nothing for me to do but bring the child home. She's too just and kind to feel any other way, and then, you know," he added, looking at the sleeping child, a tenderness in his gray eyes, "she dearly loves little children."

Did Micah Hayden know how Madam Denman loved children? More than anyone in the world, perhaps, except Theo and her own son. Never could he forget how loving she was during the long years when he and Theo, so suddenly bereft of both parents, had only a paid housekeeper to care for them in the home adjoining Ledge-lawn. She had been almost if not quite as solicitous of their welfare as their own mother had been. This was a different sort of case, however; still, as

Richard had said, "she was just and kind and loved little children."

"She'll be surprised, all right," he ventured, as the cab turned in the avenue leading to the mansion. It was fully three hundred feet in from the road, the approach bordered by majestic elms. With a flourish of the whip and a loud, "Whoa, there!" the carriage drew up to the steps in the porte-cochère.

The Grand Master opened the carriage door and stepped out. Micah, who had been holding the child passed her to him.

"Good night, Micah," he said. "This has been an incident not on the program."

"But the end is Truth, Richard," whispered the Grand Marshal. "Friendship, Love, and Truth. It will come out all right. See you in the morning."

"Good night, dear old chum," returned the Grand Master, as he slipped his latchkey into the door.

CHAPTER III

"I AM MIRIAM"

THE electric light was burning brightly in the hall as the Grand Master entered. The collie, Bonnie, awakened by the approach of the carriage, was close to the door growling savagely. Upon recognizing his master he wagged his feathery tail vigorously in joyous welcome. He sniffed at the fur-lined coat and gave a short bark.

"Quiet, Bonnie! Down, sir!" commanded the Grand Master. But the dog refused to obey; he suspected that something alive was in that coat and he careered around, jumping and sniffing all the way to the dining room which was dimly lighted. Richard laid the child on the couch in the inglenook beside the open fire. The dog put his front paws on the side of the couch and nosed about the coat examining its contents, all the time whining softly. Curiosity gratified, he wagged his tail, and laid down on the floor in front of the fire. Richard put his hat and suit case in the hall closet, then went to the foot of the staircase and listened. All was still.

“Mother!” he called in subdued tones. “Mother, are you awake?”

“Almost, dear. Why?” came from the lips he loved.

“Don’t you want to come down and see me eat my supper?” he answered, a jocular turn to his voice. “Oh, come and see the animals eat!” He was keyed up to concert pitch. The full realization of what his action might mean to his mother was beginning to dawn upon him. It had been impossible to apprise her of the coming of the little stranger, one thing had followed so closely on the other that he was only just recovering from the shock that the finding of the child had been to him. He could hear her stirring in the room above—her room. A rustle of silk, he knew she was coming; and now she appeared at the head of the stairway. His heart beat fast.

“Ah, the Duchess descends!” he cried, holding out both hands in gladsome greeting, a peculiarly tender expression stealing over his face. The Madam smiled down upon him. As “Madam” she had been introduced by her husband to the people of Norwood, and as Madam she had always been addressed.

She bore the title gracefully. Still in the early fifties she was as youthful as many a woman of thirty-five. The light brown hair was only slightly gray at the temples, the skin was smooth and devoid of all but characteristic wrinkles, and the

soft brown eyes were clear and brilliant. She had slipped on a Japanese down wrapper of golden brown, and her feet were covered with suède slippers of the same warm hue.

"A symphony in brown," thought Richard, as he held his mother in his arms and kissed her on both cheeks.

"My dear son," she murmured, returning his caresses. With his arm still around her, like lovers they made their way to the dining room. Here Bonnie's tail beat a lively tattoo on the oaken floor. He gave a sharp bark and sprang toward them. Madam Denman's keen eyes instantly spied the tiny form in its furry nest on the couch. She started forward a few steps, hesitated, turned a trifle pale, and then looked at her son. His eyes were serious but his lips were smiling.

"Another guest, Mother! I found her in my coat about as you see her now, in the ticket office at the Junction"; and then quickly and concisely without any play of imagination he told her the whole story. He handed her the note. She walked nearer the light, read it through carefully, then without comment returned it to her son. She approached the couch and stood irresolute, looking down on the child. The little one yawned. Both started. The intense excitement of the hour threatened to overcome the calmness to which both were striving to adhere. The child yawned again, stretched out her little limbs, opened a pair

of eyes as darkly blue as midnight skies and looked up wonderingly. Instinctively mother and son joined hands. The child's gaze swept the room, rested on the lady in brown, and remained there; a smile curved the rosy lips, and quick as a flash the tiny form sat erect.

"Bettymuz!" she cried, looking about her. "Bettymuz, where's you?" Her brows contracted in a perplexed little frown as she looked at the Grand Master. The little chin quivered and in rising tones she cried again, "Bettymuz! Where's my Bettymuz?" and a sob escaped her lips. She yawned and rubbed her eyes still heavy with sleep. Madam Denman sprang to the seat beside the child who looked up at her smiling sweetly through tear-filled eyes. With trembling hands she untied the silken strings of the fur-trimmed cap and removed the coat of heavy white silk trimmed with mink. Leggings of soft white wool covered a pair of slender limbs and small white shoes with patent-leather vamps. A fine white batiste frock, simply embroidered, clothed the body upon which daintily fashioned and warm undergarments could be seen, plainly the work of loving hands. Madam's cheeks were glowing. She looked up at her son standing near her.

"This is no child of ordinary parentage, Richard, her whole appearance is one of culture and refinement. Precious baby!" She gathered the little form in her arms and held it closely. The

child pressed her cheek against the soft silken wrapper.

"No plebeian ever had a nose like that," said Madam, indicating by a glance the aristocratic feature of their guest. Richard knew if his mother had a weakness, it was for a finely shaped nose. The little girl laughed and put her finger on that member.

"Nose," she repeated. "Nose, pose," and again she laughed, a little rippling laugh, and shrugged her tiny shoulders.

The color deepened in Madam's cheeks.

"Can I be dreaming, Richard?" she appealed to her son. "Is this a real child of the flesh, or is she a dream fairy?"

"We'll put her to a test," replied the Grand Master, turning toward the table where a lunch had been spread, as was the custom when he was to be detained late at night. Pouring some milk into a glass he held it toward the child saying, "Would you like a drink of milk, baby?"

It was no dream fairy that wriggled down from Madam Denman's lap and ran lightly across the room to her son's side. The child was thoroughly alive to the demands of nature. No wonder she was hungry, having been to their own knowledge nearly three hours without even a drink. Miriam took the glass between her hands after saying, "Tank you," and drank the milk to the very last drop.

“Well, you were thirsty, little one,” said Madam, resting her hand on the curly head. “Richard, put the hassock in my armchair; it will be too low for her without something in it. Tomorrow we will bring your high chair down from the attic.” She spoke excitedly, as she lifted the child who promptly said, “Tank you, Sweetheart,” and folded her hands on the edge of the mahogany table. Madam exchanged glances with her son. Every now and then the little girl would stop eating her bread and butter to inquire “When will Bettymuz come home?” The last time she spoke Richard replied:

“I’ll find her for you; just be a happy little girl, Miriam. Your name is Miriam, is it not, dear?” Whereupon to their utter amazement, the child scrambled to her feet with the agility of a squirrel and balancing herself on the hassock, delivered the following astonishing statement very plainly and distinctly, her hands above her head:

“I am Miwiam, sister of Moses and Aawon. I am a pofitess of noble lineage. With timbles and dances I perc’aimed the twiumph at the Wed Sea.” Then she resumed her seat and went on eating her supper, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

“Well, *what* do you think of that!” exclaimed Madam Denman, as she wiped the tears from her eyes. Both were striving to suppress their laugh-

ter; it would never do for them to give way, not to-night in any event.

"Good enough for a comic paper. She certainly is out of the ordinary, as all my presents are," and he stroked Bonnie's head resting on his knee. "Perhaps," he went on, "she is the reincarnation of the original Miriam. What will the Rebekahs say when they hear her, as of course they will some day! Oh, this child is certainly one of the chosen. No doubt about it. It would not surprise me if she gave you the sign of recognition and followed it up with a demand for the annual password!" He burst into uncontrollable laughter in which his mother and the little child joined, Miriam clapping her hands gleefully.

In a few moments Miriam looked at Madam and said:

"I've finished my supper, will you please entuse me?"

"Certainly, my dear," said Madam. The child slipped down from her chair and ran to the side of the Grand Master and began to pat Bonnie. The dog wagged his tail and caressed the little hand.

"To the manner born, eh, Mother?" said Richard, proudly regarding the pair at his side. "Thoroughbreds." His mother nodded understandingly.

"That was certainly the most remarkable thing I ever heard of outside of a book; what she said,

Richard. Some one undoubtedly took great pains to teach her. It was such a surprise! Won't Melissa's eyes roll when she sees her! But I am sure she will be pleased." Melissa was the maid. "But, my dear boy, I have not asked you a single question about the dedication. We will have to leave that until to-morrow, it is getting so late. The day has been a hard one for you. I am so thankful Micah could be with you. Naturally there will be a great deal of talk, but it will soon blow over." She rose from her chair. "Just see how prettily she plays with Bonnie, they will be great chums in a few days. Come, Miriam, it's time little folks were in bed and fast asleep."

The child obeyed quickly, gave the dog a last pat, then placed her hand trustingly in Madam Denman's warm clasp. Together they moved toward the hall.

"I'll take her with me in my bed for to-night, Richard. To-morrow Theo and my dear Rebekahs will help me plan, for she must stay with us until—you understand. I declare, I am so excited I don't believe I shall sleep a wink! This is such an unusual occurrence. I can realize what it has been for you, dear." She looked from her son's face to that of the child by her side.

"Let me carry her upstairs," he said. "Come, Miriam!" The child sprang into his arms. The Madam regarded them lovingly.

"My son," she said reverently, "we know not

for what purpose this little life has been placed in our hands without any choice on our part. Surely there must have been a wonderful faith in the principles for which you, as Grand Master, stand, that actuated the mother to leave her child in your care. It was the knowledge that Love never refuses the cup of cold water in His name. Let us be faithful to this trust, and some day all will be made clear. Go on, dear."

The child's wondrous eyes had never ceased observing their faces, she had thrown both arms around the Grand Master's neck, and a confiding smile wreathed her lips. He began to mount the stairs. Stretching out her little hands the child cried:

"Sweetheart, come too, I want you!"

It was then that Bettina fell asleep. *Love had found a way.*

CHAPTER IV

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE CARTER

THE Norwood Arms was a rambling old pile situated on the highest point of land at the southern end of the town of Norwood on the Penobscot River. It was built in 1823 by one Jonathan Norwood, an Englishman, and the younger son of a baronet. A man of pronounced views, radical, almost socialistic, he entered with all the enthusiasm of his nature into the work of the Order of Odd Fellows in his native land, later crossing the ocean to participate in the establishment of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows with Thomas Wildey and others, in the city of Baltimore, Maryland, on April 26, 1819.

The next year visiting Boston at the time of the institution of the lodge there, April 26, 1820, he traversed the coast of New England, and visited the principal cities. Going up the Penobscot River he was greatly attracted by the natural beauties of the little town of Stubb's Landing; bought extensively of its real estate; built the Norwood Arms, an exact replica in stone and wood of the ancestral home in Somerset, England,

and being then a landed proprietor, he applied to the state legislature for permission to change the name of his adopted home to the more euphonious one of Norwood, such being the expressed desire of the entire community. The change was granted, and forthwith the place took on a more important air. It was an era of great prosperity. Business increased; ships loaded with spool wood and pine sailed to foreign parts to return laden with the riches the other countries yielded. An Academy was founded which prepared boys for college; and two churches, a Congregational and an Episcopal, soon raised their spires heavenward.

The business interests of the place were largely banking and exporting. The First National Bank of Norwood, as well as the post office had their inception within the walls of the Norwood Arms. Now, each has its own quarters in the fine large block opposite, which also contains, in the upper stories, the Odd Fellows' Hall and banqueting rooms.

With the passing of the white-winged ships through the use of steam in navigation, the shipping business gradually passed Norwood by for the larger port at the head of the river; and so, from a hustling town doing business of a million a year, Norwood settled down into an exclusive residential place with picturesque homes, and the usual row of stores along the main street fronting

the river. In the late seventies a branch line of the railroad was built connecting Bangor with Norwood, thus opening up a quick and convenient mode of transportation for the summer visitor who sought the sequestered beauty of that section of the country and the safe boating the quiet river and inlets afforded.

The Arms was an imposing structure with its many turrets, wings, and broad verandas, and could be seen from all points of the surrounding country, a veritable landmark. The mansion was thickly covered with ivy which hung in graceful festoons from the balconies; it was the hardy English ivy, the original roots of which came from the old home across the ocean. Stone benches, placed at intervals along the drive leading to the house, afforded a delightful resting place for old and young, especially in the warmer months when waiting for the mail.

The present proprietor, or host, the title he preferred, was an elderly man of medium height, thin and wiry. His eyes were very round and very black, and he wore his mustache carefully waxed and an imperial after the French fashion. He was obviously proud of the fact that his father received his early education in Paris, and that he, the only scion of the noble house of Carter, rejoiced in the name of the first emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte; he felt it a duty, therefore, as well as a matter of choice, to perpetuate in his own person

the fashions of France. It was some thirty odd years ago that Mrs. Olivia Carter, widow of the Rev. Jeremiah Ridgeway Carter of Biddeford, and her only child, this same Napoleon Bonaparte, then in his senior year at Bowdoin College, were invited for an extended visit to the Norwood Arms by her oldest brother, John Norwood. At the close of his college career, "Napoleon B. C.," as he was facetiously called by his fellow students, returned to the Arms, and being of a literary bent and somewhat delicate in health, remained there as clerk of the hotel until the death of his Uncle John placed his mother in the position of owner, which, on her decease a few years later, fell to him. Upon assuming the position of Mine Host of the Norwood Arms, the only hostelry for twenty miles from any point of the compass, Napoleon determined to preserve most faithfully the customs instituted by his predecessors, the Yule log at Christmas, the frolic on Twelfth Night, the May Pole wreathing on the big lawn and the Halloween celebration. People came from miles around to attend these functions. No wonder the Arms was in a class entirely by itself.

But the popularity of the Inn was not wholly due to the attractions mentioned, not in later years at any rate, for what would a hotel amount to without a superior table; and for this, as well as for the immaculate care bestowed on every nook and corner of the big house, credit belonged to none

other than Cornelia Washington, the dusky queen who presided over the culinary department. Cornelia had a husband, a mild-eyed, meek little man by the name of George, and two unmarried daughters, Ruby and Pearl, "Cornelia's Jewels" they were universally called. The father was a direct descendant of the body servant of the first Jonathan Norwood who brought him from the South. Cornelia, however, by right of a superior intellect, size, and an iron will, held undisputed sway, not only over her husband, but the whole house. Formerly there was another jewel, Garnet, but she had a home of her own as the wife of Lorenzo Jackson, coachman for the Denmans, in a little house on the borders of Ledge-lawn. To this cottage Melissa Higgins, Madam Denman's maid, used to wend her way on her evenings out, for the Washington and Jackson families were the only colored people, with the exception of herself, in Norwood. On coming to live at Ledge-lawn, Melissa was taken within the jeweled circle for the reason that she could lay some claim to distinction from the fact that she had formerly been in the employ of that eccentric but talented actress, Mrs. Leslie Carter. Accordingly Melissa was most affectionately regarded, nay even worshiped by the whole string of Cornelia's jewels because Sapphire, Garnet's seven-year-old daughter, had shown at an early age unmistakable signs of histrionic talent, and as Lorenzo remarked to his wife the year previous

when Melissa came on the scene, "Miss Melissy Higgins is suttingly a most remarkable piece of mechanism, an' I reckon its our duty to a child like Sapphire to give her the benefit of such electro-cutin as Miss Melissy Higgins can be pussuaded to teach her."

Garnet, who at that particular moment was arms' deep in the washtub, gave a vigorous rub to the infant phenomena's petticoat, then looked out of the window at the young aspirant to the rôles impersonated by Mrs. Leslie Carter, standing cross legged in front of the baby carriage making hideous faces for the amusement of the infant. In tones that carried conviction she declared, "Lorenzo Jackson, you listen to me, and mark my words! Jes' you look at that child and tell me if she ain't sure born to greatness. Her fashul expression is remark'ble. The night she came the moon was out on a 'clipse and Mammy said that was a sure sign that the child born on that night was an infant pernomina." But, as Kipling says, "That is another story!"

CHAPTER V

A CONFERENCE AT THE ARMS

THE office of the Norwood Arms was rapidly filling with its usual habitués. A log fire blazed and crackled on the broad hearth, and a box of cigars was placed invitingly open on the counter. This same counter, in earlier days, before the wave of Prohibition engulfed the Pine Tree State, served as a bar, and where the bowl of steaming hot toddy used to stand, the hotel register and its accompanying ink well and pen rack now were placed. The only other reminder of those convivial times was the long mahogany cabinet back of the counter filled with hotel stationery, boxes of cigars, and a part petitioned off for a letter rack, instead of the glistening cut glass and long-necked decanters of years ago.

As each new arrival appeared in the doorway, Mr. Carter greeted him with as much ceremony as if it were his initial entrance to the inn. "Napoleon B. C." was most punctilious about all that pertained to his duty as host. It was the nightly custom for about twenty or more of the town's most

prominent citizens to repair to the hospitable office of the Arms immediately after the distribution of the evening mail, and there enjoy a social hour as guests of the proprietor. The circle about the fire was rapidly filling and the clouds of smoke rising to the ceiling attested to the appreciation of Mine Host's cigars. The Postmaster and the Town Clerk were about to resume the somewhat heated discussion postponed from the previous evening concerning the widening of upper Main Street, when the door flew open, and with a general, "How are you?" Micah Hayden approached the group around the fire.

"Halloo, Micah, you old quill driver," said the postmaster. "What's the latest news?"

"Yes, what's the news?" echoed a chorus of voices. Micah threw his coat across a table, gave his rubbers a kick into the warm corner by the mantel, then coming into the circle struck an attitude, his elbow resting on the mantel-piece.

"*News*, is it that you want? Did you never hear that there was nothing new under the sun? But that was written before the Associated Press came into existence, of which I am the humble representative from this part of the country. *Oh, yes, there's news.*" Accepting a cigar from Mine Host, he paused to light it, then continuing, "Now, if you really want to hear something that will make your hair stand on end—" he hesitated and

looked meaningly at the postmaster, who shook his finger at him.

“No reflections, Micah, I know I’m not eligible for any Danderine advertisement, but I can stand your news all right.” He laughed as he passed his hand over his shining pate as devoid of hair as a billiard ball.

“Oh, quit kidding, Micah, and give us the goods,” this from Al Stubbs, the sole remaining descendant of the once illustrious Stubbs family.

“Well, listen. But first, tell me, if any of you heard what came in early this morning?” he said, sinking into the armchair that Philip Grayson, lawyer’s clerk by day and after hours clerk at the Arms, placed beside him.

“What came in early this morning?” repeated the Sheriff, as he drew nearer.

“That’s what I said,” commented the journalist. The men looked at each other. What could Micah be driving at! Immediately all other conversation ceased and the eyes of the company were turned in his direction.

“Oh, we don’t know!” drawled Captain Dumont, striking a match on the under side of the mantel.

“Well, I’ll tell you. The *mail* came in!” In an instant the whole room was in an uproar. Micah raised his hands in mock despair. “Well, that’s the limit!” “You’re no good,” and similar expressions. All knew Micah Hayden as an

inveterate joker, but no man could be more serious than he when the occasion demanded.

"That's right! Keep on abusing me," he said good-naturedly, "but all the same if the mail had not come in I should not have this piece of news to tell you, eh, Manchester?" The postmaster nodded. He knew now the drift of Micah's remarks. All hands sat up and looked interested. Adjusting his eyeglasses, Micah leaned forward and began:

"In the mail this morning came two large packages, the limit of weight; one, however, was sealed. The reasons why, I will reveal later as the story progresses. Both packages were addressed to Richard Denman in a lady's handwriting. The postmark showed that they were from a substation of New York City."

"New York's a big place. I used to sail out from there twenty years ago," put in Captain Dumont.

"Stop butting in, Cap'," said the Sheriff. "Go on, Micah."

"I suppose you all want to know, and quite naturally," continued Micah, ignoring the interruptions, "what these packages contained. Well, when I got home to-night, Theo met me at the door, her eyes as big as the transparency over at the hall. She and Madam Denman had been having the time of their lives looking over these boxes, the Grand Master wasn't in it at all when

it came to the unpacking. Well, there were a lot of pretty little garments and things for the littlest one. Some were not new, and the baby recognized them instant, and true to her sex laid hands on them and hurried away to the nursery saying, 'Mine, mine.' But now for the climax." Here he stopped and looked at the expectant faces around him as much as to say, "*Now* will you have some respect for my remarks in the future?" then continued: "You will remember my saying that one of the packages was sealed; well, there was a letter in that box, a letter smelling of violets. Oh, I am taking Theo's word for it. Stop your grinning, Phil, you can't prove anything by me! Now there was a note and within that note was another note, to elucidate; the first note was in the form of a letter written in the same feminine hand as that on the packages, and as near as I can recollect ran thus:

"'DEAR MR. DENMAN: I am very grateful to you for your thoughtfulness. I saw the article you sent to the Associated Press ('I was the man who did the trick,' interpolated Micah), and it had the effect you wanted, easing my mind and conscience somewhat. I had worried dreadfully, fearing something might have happened to my baby, that she might have awakened and wandered out of the waiting room in search of me. Oh, I do feel so grateful to you! I cannot begin to tell

THE GRAND MASTER'S TREASURE

you how much. Please use inclosed for Miriam as you see fit. More will follow.

“ ‘For the present, believe me,

“ ‘Sincerely yours,

“ ‘B. L.’ ”

There was a cashier's check for one hundred dollars made out to Richard Denman. *That* was the note *within* the note, see? ”

A murmur of approval went round the circle. All were deeply interested in the latest sensation in Norwood's experience.

Dr. Strong, who had joined the listeners while Micah was rehearsing the letter, observed, that it looked to him as if B. L., whoever she was, intended to look after the child financially.

“ Exactly so,” observed Mine Host, passing around the cigars. Just then the telephone bell rang. Philip unhooked the receiver. “ Yes, this is the Norwood Arms. . . . It is the clerk, Philip Grayson, who is speaking. . . . Who? . . . Oh, yes, Mrs. Dumont.” Cries of “ Beat it, Cap’. Better get a move on,” came from various parts of the room. Captain Dumont, a fat little man with a frightened expression on his round red face, and squeezed tightly, as it were, into a well worn pepper-and-salt suit, grabbed his overcoat and hat and made a bee line for the outer door. “ Pardon me, what did you say? . . . No, he is *not* here, Mrs. Dumont. . . . Yes, he has been, but he

left a few minutes ago. . . . No trouble at all. . . . Good night." And he hung up the receiver.

"Oh, Willie boy, come home, come home, come home," sang Micah, whereupon there was a shout of laughter at Captain Dumont's expense. The custom of Mrs. Dumont of "keeping tabs," so to speak, on her spouse had become quite a joke with the frequenters of the Arms. Invariably she would call up on one pretext or another just to find out where he might be. To-night the same feeling of unrest that sent the little captain up the street on a dog trot, evidently was awakened in other masculine breasts, for, one by one they took their leave earlier than usual until the postmaster, the journalist, and Mr. Carter were the only ones left around the fire. Micah bit off the end of a fresh cigar, lighted it, and laying a hand on the postmaster's knee said in a low tone:

"Now that I have given out the latest news following the incident at Trowbridge Junction, we've decided to call a halt. Madam Denman, the Grand Master, and I discussed the whole situation pretty exhaustively this evening before I came here, and we arrived at the conclusion that, now the child has become a member of the family at Ledge-lawn for the time being anyway, it will be better to let the subject drop from general discussion as far as possible. Whoever the mother may be she has some good reason, to her way of thinking at least, for keeping her identity a secret. The whole

thing is bound to be known in time, but I think you will agree with me that as far as giving out news to the public is concerned, *now* is a good time to stop." Both men acquiesced. "And so," observed Micah, "'Here endeth the first lesson.'" He rose with evident reluctance and reached for his overshoes. Mine Host raised a protesting hand. He dearly loved these social talks, and Micah came so seldom. Then, too, he had some questions he wanted to ask, would Micah not remain a while longer? The postmaster, taking the hint, pleaded work at the office, said "Good night," and left.

"Napoleon B. C.," drew his chair up closer to Micah's and assumed a confidential attitude. Just then the clock struck. Micah counted the strokes.

"Ten o'clock! That means that I must be going in a very few moments if I want to keep solid with Cornelia. But what is it, Uncle Poly?" addressing him by the euphonious title lately bestowed upon him by the youngest member of the Denman household. This appellation amused Mr. Carter greatly. "It has such an appetizing sound," he said. "Like rolypoly pudding." He smiled and smoothed his mustache and imperial. "It often comes to me," he continued meditatively, "what the Madam would do if Miriam should ever be taken away. She has certainly become already greatly attached to the child."

His companion winked knowingly. "Ah,

‘there’s the rub!’ The two are the greatest chums ever, and as for Dick, he’s her abject slave. I’m pretty well smashed over the little lady myself. You and I will have to fight a duel some day, Uncle Poly,” and he made an imaginary sword’s thrust at him. Mr. Carter laughed, a conscious little laugh. Catching a glimpse of his reflection in the mirror opposite, he scowled fiercely, twirled his mustache, and cocked his head on one side like a wise old bird.

“I never saw such a bright child for her age. She has a good ear for music, can carry an air as well as I can, and as for talking!” Uncle Poly slapped his knees and they both laughed heartily. Micah rose and put on his overcoat.

“I’m to sit up with Joe to-night, Uncle Poly, so I cannot stay longer. Dick leaves there at eleven and I remain all night. Doctor says he doubts if Joe stays with us another week. It tugs at my heart strings to see Clara’s sad face. And the children, too, such an united family.” He warmed his gloves before drawing them on, preparatory to taking his leave. Mr. Carter took a turn about the room. Coming close to Micah he patted him affectionately on the back. He was greatly attached to “his boys,” as he was wont to call Micah and Richard. Drawing his hand across his eyes he said:

“I went to see Joe this morning. He was very weak. I took the children for a turn down the

shore road. A sad case. The first really serious illness among our members for many years. Well, if I can do anything, command me. Good night, my boy."

"Good night, Uncle Poly," called back Micah from the foot of the steps.

Mr. Carter returned to his seat beside the dying embers, and was just settling himself for a last smoke when the door was flung open and the portly Cornelia entered, closely followed by her husband, loaded with pails and mops. She coughed as she entered, but this intimation failing to arouse Mr. Carter from his reverie, she stepped briskly to his side and, with arms akimbo, remarked in no uncertain tones:

"Mr. Carter, suh! De cuckoo done yell out haf' pas' ten mos' an hour 'go. 'Less yo' want tuh lib in a pig-pen, dis room's gwine to git a scrubbin' quick. Dis air am suthin' turrible!" and she sniffed the air like a war-horse on the eve of battle. Mr. Carter rose quickly. He knew whose word was law in the Arms after ten o'clock. "Yo' bed am all het up, Mr. Carter, suh, an' de lemunade am pipin' hot on de radumater," she called after him. Then she threw open the windows, remarking to the shivering George: "Dis 'bacca smoke's so thick yo' could cut it wid a knife! Passin' strang' how some folks make chimbls ob demselves! Don't let me evah ketch yo' smokin'; George, yo' heah?"

CHAPTER VI

PILGRIMAGE AND PRAYER

ALL ready to start for the Promised Land, Baby mine! Will you be carried, or will you go on foot? What is the order for to-night?"

Miriam hesitated; placing a tiny forefinger upon her lip she cast down her eyes and appeared to be thinking deeply; but it was only for a brief moment; then looking into his face she said, her brows wrinkling:

"Lem'me see! I wonner how far we are, Witchard?"

"As I remember it," replied the Grand Master, leaning on the newel post, "you said last night we were nearing the Red Sea."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the child, all alert. "The Wed Sea will be weached vewy soon now, and I'm glad, for the childwen are most tired out. Where are the childwen? Where's Bonnie?" At the sound of her voice the collie came bounding out of the dining room from his favorite place in front of the open fire. With tail and ears erect he stood beside his little mistress, his eyes shining.

"I must get my staff," she said, and with the

dog at her heels she ran to the end of hall, returning with an Alpine stock twice her height in length. It was rather cumbersome for such a little maid to carry, but as it seemed necessary for Moses to carry a staff, it had to be done. There were steep mountains—the stairs in this instance—to be climbed, and a crook was of great assistance. Taking her post at the foot of the stairs beside the Grand Master, she spent some time in patting the collie, and by caresses and loving words she finally persuaded him to stand quietly and not rush precipitately ahead as was his desire. To the collie was intrusted the important rôle of the Children of Israel.

“Now, Witchard, I’m Moses, so I’ll go ahead, Bonnie’s the Childwen, and he’ll come next, and you are Aawon, and must keep the Childwen from getting fwitened and turning back. We’ll sing, ‘I’m a pilgwim, and I’m a stwanger,’ you begin!”

These pilgrimages took place regularly every evening after supper, and when Richard was away, Madam was pressed into service and sometimes Melissa played a part. The road was a long one and the rests were frequent. At times the staff sadly interfered with Moses’s progress and would fall and hit Bonnie, who, delighted at an excuse, would disgrace himself by breaking ranks and scudding up the stairs as fast as his nimble legs could carry him. On such occasions, Miriam would look after the fleeing “Children” with a

distressed expression on her little face. "He's naughty, Bonnie is," she would say, "but I 'spose mischief gets into his legs just as it does sometimes into mine, and he just *can't* keep still." She was very fond of impersonating Bible characters, and it was wonderful her familiarity with the events in the Old Testament. Martha Graham had always been a student of the Bible and had told the little child, as she had her mother before her, stories from Holy Writ, and sung her to sleep with hymns both ancient and modern, and so it happened quite naturally that Miriam was as familiar with the characters of those far distant days as the children of the present are with Brownies and the funny little folks in the nonsense rhymes and jingles.

It took a longer time than usual to reach the top of the hill to-night, as the "Children" ran ahead in a most undignified fashion and Moses, after a brief consultation with Aaron, decided to ride the rest of the way.

"Sweetheart," she cried, as she rode into the nursery on the Grand Master's shoulder, where Madam Denman, with Bonnie beside her, now quite sobered and dignified, awaited her coming, "I'm Miwiam now, your little girl, are you glad to see me?" Madam gave her a hug and began to unbutton the frock of the weary little pilgrim. Her son lingered by the door watching them. As

Miriam tossed her dress over her head, she exclaimed:

"Why, Witchard, I most forgot my good-night kiss! Did you wait for it?" and she threw her arms round his neck, kissing him again and again. Whispering softly, she said: "Please take care of my staff, and don't let the 'Gyptians get it." He promised.

"Richard," said Madam Denman, as he turned to go, "Did I tell you that Uncle Poly telephoned just before you came that he would be over this evening? 'Something special,' he said."

"First time you've mentioned it, Duchess. I hope he'll come early, for Theo and I go to the Powers' to-night. Joe is very low," he said in a whisper.

His mother looked up anxiously.

"Is it really so serious as that? Poor Clara!" she sighed. "I will see you in the library as soon as darkness settles over the camp, and the 'Children' are in the Land of Nod."

"Think Bonnie better stay?" he asked.

"Why, Richard, baby couldn't rest contentedly without her Bonnie dog to keep her company," then, continuing in French, the language they were accustomed to use when wishing to be confidential before Miriam, she told him to return in about ten minutes and listen beside the door if he wanted to hear Miriam repeat her prayer. It was very dear and sweet to hear her blessing at the close.

“ And now, darling,” turning to the child who had been watching them with curious eyes, “ let us prepare for bed.”

Miriam placed her little shoes side by side under the clothes tree that had been made especially for her use, and hung her garments carefully upon it; then Madam brushed the thick yellow hair, and pinned the curls in a top-knot on the shapely head.

“ Now for a swim in the Pool of Happiness!” said Madam as Melissa entered bearing a tub of warm water for the evening bath.

It was amusing to see the dog mount guard over his little charge while she was in the water. At first he would whine, even bark, and then would lap her little hands as they grasped the sides of the tub. Now he had overcome all anxiety, and would sit sedately by, watching Madam bathe her. Occasionally he would kiss her hand, and sometimes let her bathe his face, much to the child’s delight.

Rosy, sweet and refreshed, Madam laid her in the little bed with its white canopy, then placing a dark shade over the electric-light bulb, she seated herself in a low chair at the foot of the crib, her hand resting on the coverlet. The collie pushed his muzzle through the bars of the crib to rest his head as near his playmate as possible. The child patted the soft head. When all was very still Madam said :

"Now, Miriam, your prayer." The child closed her eyes.

"Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me," said the little voice, then paused.

"Go on," said Madam, "Bless thy—" The child's eyelids trembled, a suspicion of a smile lurked around the rosy lips, and then to the consternation and amusement of the mother as well as of the son listening outside the door, these words came very slowly and distinctly:

"Woast this little lamb to-night, not boil him." An explosion of laughter, followed by the sound of retreating footsteps in the front hall and down the stairs, together with the tapping of Bonnie's tail on the floor, was about all that Madam could stand. She covered her face with her hand to shut out the sight of a pair of dark eyes flashing with merriment, looking directly at her from the crib. With difficulty she controlled the muscles of her face, so she could withdraw her hand. This would never do. "Miriam," she said, her voice shaking in spite of her efforts. "Miriam, when I told Melissa to roast the lamb for dinner, not to boil it, I never referred to your little prayer, and you knew it. Now that is not the right way to worship God and the dear Saviour, whose little lamb you are. Never do such a thing again. Say your verse as you should, and Sweetheart will know that you are her dear little girl once more."

Again the eyelids dropped, the chubby hands

clasped, and in reverent and subdued tones she repeated:

“ Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me,
Bless Thy little lamb to-night.
Through the darkness be Thou near me,
Watch my sleep till morning light.”

Then came the blessings. Everyone was remembered from the mysterious Bettymuz to Bonnie. Sometimes she was quite undecided whether Richard came before Bettymuz or after, and a great deal of argument followed in her childish way until sleep claimed her.

During these discussions Madam would slip softly away, leaving Bonnie to guard her as he had done ever since the first night she came to Ledgelawn.

CHAPTER VII

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF ODD FELLOWSHIP

THE Grand Master was reading by the drop light in the library when his mother entered. He looked up with his brightest smile. "What a little witch Miriam is!" he exclaimed. "I'm afraid I disgraced myself, but I couldn't help it. I beat a hasty retreat, for the situation was convulsingly funny." Madam joined in his laugh.

"I am thankful that I can relax the muscles of my face. Never before in my life have I had such a siege keeping sober. If you could only have seen that child's face! It was a study. Witch? She's the most fascinating little creature I ever saw. What will she be when she grows up!"

"I expect she'll create sad havoc among the boys with those blue eyes of her's. We'll have to keep a watch out if she is with us."

"Why, Richard, I had no idea she noticed my remarking to Melissa to roast the lamb for dinner, not to boil it. We have had boiled lamb so much lately I thought a *roast* would be acceptable for a change."

"And *we got it*, beyond a doubt!" and again his

boyish laugh rang out. Madam wiped the tears from her eyes and shook her head knowingly.

"Indeed we did, no mistake, dear." Taking her embroidery from its basket, she worked awhile in silence. The telephone bell rang.

"Who called, Richard?" she asked, on his return from the hall.

"Dr. Strong, Mother. He has a hurry call to West Newbury, and said he would go to see Joe the last thing to-night. He is very busy now, there is much sickness, so he says."

"I sent Melissa over to Clara's this morning with some delicacies for Clara and the children. You and Theo must see that Clara does not neglect taking care of herself. One is so apt to do so under the stress of so much anxiety. Are the sick committee faithful to call and to do?"

"Faithful?" questioned her son. "Why, Mother, you know how devoted all are, Odd Fellows as well as Rebekahs."

Madam Denman held her work nearer the light and examined it critically, then laid it in the basket on the table. She was not in the mood for such work to-night. She rested her elbow on the table, shading her eyes with her hand.

"Do not misunderstand me, Son. Theoretically, they are always faithful; practically, well, not all the time, you know that. It is the way of the world. Life has taught me that a truly thoughtful, good man is an *odd fellow* whether he is a

member of our great Order or not; the good man loves his neighbor, and does his duty by him because it is the natural and right thing for him to do—he could not do otherwise and be happy. Unselfishness never forgets. Ah, my dear son, some there are who will be conscientious in the performance of duty under any and all circumstances, who need not be reminded of their obligation ‘To visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead, and to protect and educate the orphan.’ Others are glib with the letter, but the spirit of Odd Fellowship is sadly wanting.”

The Grand Master closed his book and laid it aside. He stretched back in his chair, resting his head upon his clasped hands. He regarded his mother thoughtfully. They were very much alike, mother and son, more perhaps in mental characteristics, as personally Richard favored his father. He had his tall, slender figure, and keen gray eyes with their thick lashes and straight brows, but the soft light that shone in them at times was the same as that reflected by the brown eyes opposite him.

“All you say, Duchess, is only too true. One has to remember to be very charitable these days. If one fully realized that the All-seeing Eye searches the innermost recesses of our hearts and judges by motives irrespective of acts, he might not have to be reminded to be attentive to duty. But the work of our Order is something glorious

to contemplate. Think how far-reaching it is today! From a little group of five faithful souls banded together to spread the thought of true brotherhood not a hundred years ago, to over two million members in the world at the present day, is a wonderful demonstration of the power of omnipotent Love. And statistics tell us that this phenomenal growth has been within the last fifty odd years."

"The Rebekah Lodge has been of great assistance, Richard."

"Splendid! It is a constant joy and satisfaction to me to see the harmonious relations that exist almost universally between the subordinate and Rebekah lodges. One in thought and purpose. Every time I listen to the inspired words of the Rebekah ritual I feel that Schuyler Colfax was divinely guided in all he did. We Odd Fellows may have been slow to recognize the latent ability of the Rebekahs to govern, but we are doing our best to make up for it now. The sisters should be permitted to conduct the entire business of their lodge without interference from the brothers, they are capable of it. I, for one, am always glad to sit quietly and admire the manner in which the sisters transact the business of the lodge, as well as their uniformly excellent rendering of the beautified work of the degree."

"The progress of the Assembly proves conclusively, Richard, that the women are fully com-

petent to conduct the entire business of the Rebekah Lodge. We have some women of unusual attainments and sterling worth in our Order, grand, unselfish, loving characters."

"That's right, Mother; I'd put our local Rebekahs against any in the state or out of it, for that matter, for conscientious work under all circumstances. I feel that the *spirit* is *first* in their hearts, and 'Where thy treasure is, there shall thy heart be also.' Think of their devotion in the present case, at Brother Powers'. That house has been cleaned from cellar to attic, some one has been there constantly to oversee the work of the household and to care for the children in order that Clara could spend all her time with Joe. Poor Clara!" and a shadow swept over his face as he thought what the impending separation would mean to her and her children. She and her husband had been sweethearts from childhood, and their married life had been a very happy one.

His thoughts reverted to Theo Hayden, Clara Powers' near friend and sister Rebekah. What a radiant, happy, and strong personality she possessed! He could depend upon her fidelity to duty at all times. He had never cared for any other girl. As children they had braided the May Pole together on the lawn of the Norwood Arms, and during his college days she had been his companion at the commencement exercises and all the social functions incident to the life.

Theo had had other admirers, but for Richard Denman she had always shown a marked preference. As for him, no matter what pursuit he was engaged in, Theo was ever uppermost in his thoughts, stimulating him to better work and higher ideals, and he felt a regard for her which was sincere and very deep.

CHAPTER VIII

UNCLE POLY DELIVERS DR. JOHNSON'S MESSAGE

THE sharp sound of the knocker on the front door broke the stillness. The clock on the mantel was just chiming the hour of eight when Mr. Carter entered. He divested himself of his fur coat, remarking that it was "a nipping and an eager air." Coming into the library he slipped into his favorite seat near the fire and settled back among the soft cushions with a sigh of satisfaction.

"It is always a privilege to be permitted entrance into a home such as this one is, dear Madam," he observed.

"Home would not seem like home unless our friends could share its joys and comforts with us," returned Madam Denman graciously. "And you are like our very own, Mr. Carter." "Napoleon B. C.," bowed his appreciation, the light kindling in his black eyes. What a fortunate man he was, to be sure!

"Yes, Uncle Poly, mother is just right in her estimate there, as she is about everything else. But to digress, I must confess that I am quite

‘curos,’ as old Kong used to say, to hear what you have to tell us.” Kong was the almond-eyed Celestial who accompanied the judge and his wife when they came from California. He remained in their service over twenty years, a faithful servant, the only one of his kind in Norwood, when he returned to China to end his days among his own people.

“Napoleon B. C.” rubbed his small slender hands together and chuckled gleefully. It was so seldom he had any news to tell, Micah claimed the monopoly by right, but now he had something of real interest to communicate, and the thought pleased him. Looking first at one and then at the other of his companions, he squared himself against the cushions, placed his finger tips together, and with an expression of great satisfaction, began his story.

“It came about in this way. I had occasion to drive over to Newbury to-day, Hiram reported a scarcity of hay, and as I had heard of a farmer there who had some to sell I drove to see him. Made a quick trade and a good one. On my way home I stopped in for a little chat with my old college chum, Dr. Johnson. We got to talking about the dedication, and quite naturally he spoke of our Grand Master. He asked me some pointed questions, so I thought, and afterwards apologized and said that he would explain why he had asked them, he had very good reasons. He would tell

me what he had never breathed to any other person for the reason that he very much dislikes getting into the lime light, and in this instance he felt he might be running some risk. Doc was always a diffident chap, but not a coward, no indeed!

"To my way of thinking, what he told me is the most important piece of evidence we have yet heard in regard to our baby's family connections." Here he paused to adjust his eyeglasses and to peruse a memorandum he took from his side pocket. His companions drew nearer; the subject was of such vital interest to them both that not a syllable must be lost.

"It appears," he continued, "that a Miss Martha Graham, a woman well along in years, came to West Newbury about three years ago to live on the farm with her brother John." Madam started. "Not John Graham, the man who used to sell me dahlias?" she interrupted.

"Exactly so," returned Mr. Carter, "the very same grizzly-haired old fellow, tall as a bean pole and about as graceful. Well, Martha was his sister, and like the brother a rather peculiar person, well educated and refined. Sprang from good New England stock, the Grahams of Calais are relations, Doc says. Martha left home when a young girl to go with a family as nursemaid, and continued to live with them all the years after, save for an occasional visit home. When she came home three years ago she brought a little baby, a

fine child. The mother came summers for a visit. Doc used to see them driving John's old white mare in that rickety old carryall, you remember it?" addressing Madam. She nodded and smiled. "The mother was a rather unusual looking young woman, he says. She had black hair, slightly wavy, and very large and expressive blue eyes, real violet eyes. Doc waxed eloquent on the subject of her beauty, as he is something of an artist. Now, he declares, that the child is the very image of the mother except that her hair is blonde." Madam exchanged glances with her son, both realized the import of all that he said. Mr. Carter ceased speaking for awhile, removed his eyeglasses, and held them lightly in his hand. He, too, began to feel the strain of all this uncovering. Madam moved her chair away from the table.

"Richard," she said, "I wish you would shade the light a little, for some reason my eyes ache to-night. I think I won't embroider so closely as I have lately, it may be too trying for my eyes." Richard complied with his mother's request, but instead of resuming his seat stood by the mantelpiece, his arm resting on it.

"Pray, go on, Uncle Poly," said Madam, "we are *very much interested*," dwelling with emphasis on the last three words.

"Let me see," he mused; "oh, yes, I was commenting on the remarkable resemblance between mother and child. The little girl's name was Miri-

am." Madam shivered and drew nearer the fire, some intangible fear was trying to take hold of her. Again the silence was unbroken, save for the ticking of the clock, and the crackling of the wood fire. Mr. Carter placed his glasses in their case and returned them with the notebook to his pocket. He could see the effect his words were having on his listeners, Madam seemed unusually agitated, but he knew beyond peradventure that the time would come when they would hear of these circumstances, and agreed with Dr. Johnson that the sooner they knew them the better.

"Well, to resume. One night last October, John Graham came to Doc's in a great hurry; Martha had had an attack of heart failure. He hitched right up and started for the farm while John kept on to the Junction to send a dispatch to the child's mother. She got there two days before Martha passed away. 'A very sweet, capable little woman,' so Doc said. She remained awhile with John after all was over and then went away. Doctor took her and the little child to the Junction himself, the old mare had gone lame. He says that it was on the very night that our baby was found in the Grand Master's coat. He remembers it well on account of the dedication of the Odd Fellows Hall.

On their ride, she confided much to him he did not care to speak of even to me, but he is confident that she is no ordinary person and that the

leaving of the child was entirely unpremeditated. Some time, he is sure, that she will come for the child, just as she has written you."

"Did he mention what her name was?" asked Richard.

"Why, yes," replied Mr. Carter. "He said it was Lawson, or Lawton, he could not say which, but thought it was Lawton. When I left him he said, '*You tell Mr. Denman for me that, when he comes across a woman with black hair and eyes to match the baby's he will have no difficulty in locating the mother of his Treasure.*'" His story ended, Mr. Carter sank back among the cushions and closed his eyes. Madam moved uneasily.

"Where is John Graham," she asked suddenly.

Mr. Carter opened his eyes and came up with a start.

"Where is John Graham?" he repeated. "Why, he left the farm just after Mrs. Lawton did, and went to Portland to place it in the hands of a real-estate firm there for sale, then he went to Montreal to go *via* the Canadian Pacific to the far West. Doc had a letter from him from Calgary. He said he was going into stock raising in the Kootenay district. John is a man who will make a success of anything he undertakes. I don't think you will ever see him again."

"Did Doctor say where this Mrs. Lawton lived?" inquired the Grand Master.

"He said she told him she was living in New

York for the present. I asked him if she was a business woman, but he would not tell me anything further. He said he might possibly tell you if the time came when he thought ripe and, provided of course, that *our* Miriam turned out to be *her* Miriam!" and with one accord they all burst into a fit of hysterical laughter.

"What's the joke?" called out a cheery voice as the front door closed softly, and Theo Hayden's face looked in at the library door. "You are as chipper as a lot of crickets." She was like some tropical bird with her bronze brown hair shining under the toque of red velvet and mink, and her slender figure clad in the neat-fitting tailor-made suit of red broadcloth trimmed with fur. Her brown eyes sparkled, and her cheeks glowed with the bloom of perfect health and radiant youth.

"Theo," said Mr. Carter, rising to greet her, "in me you see the original cricket on the hearth, all others claiming to be are frauds. I'm on exhibition for the last time, believe me."

"Pretty little creature!" laughed the girl, shaking his hand, "but you are in a good place here, better stick to this hearth. Always a warm welcome, one never misses it." She took the chair Richard placed for her near the fire. "This is a regular orphans' retreat, and we're the 'Two Orphans,' for this occasion only, eh, Uncle Poly?" she rattled on, noticing the strained expression on Madam's usually serene countenance. She sus-

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pected that something out of the ordinary had been under discussion, and her opinion was confirmed when, on catching the Grand Master's eye he elevated his eyebrows, in a way she knew so well, and glanced toward his mother. Yes, something disturbing was in the wind, so she tried to be very merry, and her vivacity helped greatly to dispel the feeling of uneasiness occasioned by Mr. Carter's narrative. Taking up the poker she gave the logs a gentle poke, the fiery mass fell.

"Now see what you've done!" teased Richard, pointing to the hearth.

"I don't care, lazy boy," she retorted. "It's time you got a move on and piled on another log. If it were not for me, this fire would have been out in a few moments and as black as your hat."

"Which, pardon me, is brown," returned Richard.

"Don't contradict me, Saucy, but tend the fire! The hour is late and I suppose we should be on our way up the street. Aren't you a bit 'scareful,' Dickie, as Miriam says, to be out so late with a lone woman, and that same meself?" and she looked up mischievously at him from under her long lashes. Richard threw back his head and laughed. He was accustomed to Theo's jesting, she could be very tantalizing when the mood was on her and she knew in her heart how fond Richard was of her. He piled the logs high in the

broad fireplace. Then facing her, he said, still smiling:

"Am I afraid to be out late at night with you? Well, that depends." His direct glance into her eyes made the color mantle her cheeks. "The train will not be in until long after we are on duty, so I do not think I will be tempted to beg you to elope with me. Not to-night, anyway."

Theo tossed her head and waved her muff at him.

"You'd be glad to send me back as soon as we reached the Junction, wouldn't he, Uncle Poly?"

Mr. Carter bent an admiring look upon her and bowing with old-time courtesy said:

"Speak for him, but don't speak for me. I believe in holding fast to what is good."

"And you call her *good*?" cried Richard, raising both hands in an attitude of deprecation.

"Come, come, children," said Madam, joining in the laugh that followed Richard's remark, "the moments are slipping by and Duty calls. Give my fondest love to Clara, and I shall not expect you home until I see you, Son."

Richard raised her face to his and kissed his mother tenderly.

"Go to bed, Duchess dear, and sleep well. You and Uncle Poly can have a nice little 'heart-to-heart' talk after we go, and that will cheer you up, I know. Theo will simmer down pretty soon

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and will be my Right Supporter for to-night, at least."

"Yes, dearest friend," said Theo, her arm about Madam's waist. "You know I am a great one to jest and carry on, but it is only on the surface. We shall not forget to be loving and thoughtful. I thought as I was on my way over here to-night of what you told us on your last birthday," and she quoted from Browning:

"Our times are in His hand,
Who saith, 'A whole I planned.'"

So we need not worry for poor Joe, or anyone else if we really trust in Him. With love in our hearts, what have we to fear?" And the Grand Master with Theo Hayden beside him passed out into the frosty night along the avenue to the village street on their mission of Love the exemplification of the principles of Odd Fellowship.

And it came to pass, that on the following Sunday afternoon, the mortal remains of Joseph Powers were laid in the receiving tomb in the little cemetery by the riverside. The Odd Fellows took charge, and the beautiful service was observed according to the ritual. Mrs. Powers and the two children came directly to Ledge-lawn on their return from the cemetery, there to remain while the cottage was being dismantled, incident to their removing to Portland to make their home with

the paternal grandparents. The days of their stay in the home of the Grand Master were very happy ones, particularly for Miriam. She was on the top wave of delight having two congenial playmates, and many were the pilgrimages the children made on their way to the Promised Land.

CHAPTER IX

INSTITUTING THE REBEKAH LODGE AT ELMHURST

AT last the day arrived when the long anticipated event, the instituting of the Rebekah Lodge at Elmhurst, was to be celebrated. The degree staff of Esperanza Rebekah Lodge, No. 31, of Norwood, had been invited by the State Assembly President, Miss Lucretia Ward, to exemplify the work of the degree in the beautified form. The members of the staff were at the hall bright and early rehearsing, and with the assistance of the brothers, packed the paraphernalia preparatory to making an early start.

On her way to the station, Theo ran into Ledge-lawn to see Madam.

"I do wish you were going with us," said Theo. "We all shall miss you so much. Just think, it will be the first time since I was initiated that you have not filled the Chaplain's station. Oh, why can't you go?" she pleaded. "She'll be perfectly safe." And they both glanced toward Miriam in her little chair in the inglenook. The child looked up from under her curls, she knew that Theo referred to her.

"Sweetheart can't possibly go to-day, Theo.

Moses is busy and Aawon is away. The childwen do get into mischief so." She sighed a funny little sigh and folded her hands and looked at Bonnie stretched at length beside her.

"Yes," said Madam, "these supposititious brothers are unusually busy since the Powers left, for they went part way with them, you know." And she opened her eyes very wide as she looked at Theo. Then in an undertone, "I sometimes wonder if there are any others. Do you suppose there can be?"

Theo gave her a look, the meaning of which could not be misunderstood, and as they passed into the hall said:

"Don't you spend one second in worrying about that, Madam, there never was and never will be but one of her kind, *believe me!* Her imagination knows no bounds. Why, the other day she confided to me that Bonnie was her brother Aaron in a dog's skin! Talk about fairy tales! Well, I must away." Looking in the library she called: "Good-by, Baby Bunting, Theo's going!"

The child came running into the hall. She held up her face to be caressed.

"I'll pick a rose right here," said Theo, as she kissed the dimple in the little cheek.

A moment more and Theo was in the sleigh, Madam with Miriam beside her waving their hands from the window.

'As the afternoon wore on the sun became

clouded and by seven o'clock the soft feathery flakes that had begun to fall had so increased that a regular old-fashioned snowstorm had set in and with the wind springing up at sunset there was every indication of a blizzard. The snow was piling in drifts and the trains were all behind time. The members of the Norwood Lodge were joined at the Junction by President Ward and her suite. The Grand Secretary also was with them. The Grand Master and his Marshal were to follow on the later train from Portland, where they had been called the day before on lodge business.

At half past seven, the hour appointed for the meeting to open, the large lodge room of the Odd Fellows' hall was filled with visiting Rebekahs and nearly a hundred applicants for the new lodge were in waiting. The work of initiating the candidates was delayed a half hour in the hope that the other Grand Officers would put in an appearance. As the train had not yet passed the Junction, so the telegraphic operator informed them, the President decided to proceed with the work of initiation. The exemplification of the degree by the out-of-town staff was loudly applauded and the words of the ritual made a deep impression on the eighty-five members who signed the roll at the secretary's desk.

The time was now ripe for instituting the lodge. President Ward called the Inside Guardian to her.

"See if the Grand Master and his suite are in

waiting; if not, have one of the brothers inquire about what prospects there are of the train coming in. I want to have the Grand Officers present if possible," she said.

"Trains all tied up," was the information vouchsafed by the brother sent out to investigate. Sister Ward then called the meeting to order, and ascertaining from the Grand Secretary that the charter, signed and sealed, was in his possession, began the ceremony of instituting "Sunshine Rebekah Lodge, No. 79, I.O.O.F., of Maine."

Miss Lucretia Ward, President of the Rebekah Assembly of Maine, was a woman of remarkable executive ability and sterling worth. She had a high regard for the responsibilities of her office and of the Order she represented, and this together with a keen sense of humor, made her an officer whose work was watched with great interest. To-night she was looking remarkably well; her gown of semi-transparent black over shimmering pink was most becoming. She wore no ornaments save the regalia of her office.

Installation of officers followed the institution of the lodge. During this ceremony the following telegram was handed the President:

"Grand Officers stalled in train near Newbury. No hope of getting to Elmhurst to-night. Accept best wishes for a successful evening.

"RICHARD DENMAN, *Grand Master.*"

The President read the dispatch to the lodge, and expressed her regret at their absence. After appointing of committees, night of meeting, and placing the lodge in the same district with Esperanza, which fact elicited great applause, the new Noble Grand grasped the gavel with trembling hand and closed lodge in due form.

And then came the banquet! The long tables arranged in the form of the letter T, were tastefully decorated in pink and green, the Rebekah colors, and a most delicious and dainty supper was served. Everyone was bubbling over with good nature. Let the wind howl and the storm rage, within all was light and cheer; the long-desired Rebekah lodge was an established fact, and hilarity was the order of the wee small hours of the day.

And the speeches! It was in her after-supper remarks that Sister Ward invariably made a hit. Her shafts of wit were always pointed with a moral dart and to-night she was at her best. When called upon, she at once launched forth upon her favorite topic, the duties of a Rebekah.

“I want to say a few words to the new lodge about the work that has been done here this evening. If I should ask right now for a rising vote of all who, at the time of their initiation, discerned and remember the significance underlying the obligation they took upon themselves, I doubt if a dozen stood up to be counted. You knew that you

were being made Rebekahs and that was quite sufficient. Now, you are not any different from the majority under the same circumstances; we live and learn by experience. Don't think that I'm going to preach—that I leave to the brothers—but I want to tell you how to start right, and now is the time to begin.

Odd Fellowship is founded upon fraternity which embraces the triune principles, Friendship, Love, and Truth, and unless you bring these into your lives by keeping what they mean constantly before you, you are a failure as far as being a true Rebekah is concerned. Remember, it is not enough to merely *repeat* the words of the ritual and think your work done, *you should live up to them*. As I go about the state visiting lodge after lodge, I find the same problem confronting each one in a greater or lesser degree. Some one tells me that 'Sister So-and-So is trying to run the lodge,' and that 'Sister Thus-and-So is jealous and says disagreeable things,' and that the brothers are either 'all there is,' so far as actual work is concerned, to the lodge, or, merely 'figure-heads,' dozing in their seats by the door. When I get down to the bottom of it all, I find as a general thing little truth in such yarns—*yarns*, that's what I call them, but the proper word is lies, *just lies*. The drones in the hive let the busy bees do the work, and because they do it so well and receive the credit for duty well done, these drones

say the faithful bees want to 'run things.' For my part, I say, 'Thank God they *are* doing it, and *may they keep right on!*' Applause.

"I take that applause as an encore," said the President, her brown eyes twinkling, "so I shall touch upon the subject that is agitating me and which I hope will agitate you. I could weep when I look about me and fail to see our Grand Master and Brother Hayden! I regret their absence on your account as well as on my own, regarding them as being vitally interested not only in the Home for Odd Fellows and Orphans, but in my pet scheme, my dream I may say (for it is all in my mind now), and that is as you may have heard, a home for the aged Rebekah. We have the road paved toward establishing an abiding place for the aged and indigent Odd Fellow and the homeless orphan, but when I think what will become of a plain old Rebekah when she gets past earning her living, and is not near enough to second childhood to be called an orphan, I feel like saying something; and," shaking her head ominously, "I'm going to do it."

"Listen, Brothers! Do you realize that there is only the County Alms House and the Old Ladies' Home (and you have to pay something to get into the latter) for the aged maiden Rebekah? For my part I'd hate to go to either place. Now what are we going to do, can anyone tell me?" She folded her hands and waited for a reply. A jovial, newly

made Rebekah brother, one of a group near the door, loudly whispered to his neighbor:

“Get married!”

Miss Ward's sharp ears caught the words. Quick as a flash she pointed a slender finger directly toward the corner from which the whisper came and said in her most gracious manner, “Will the brother kindly rise so I may look him over?”

A roar of laughter spontaneously burst forth. She waited until the merriment had subsided. “Oh, you don't dare to stand up and be counted! I told you so.” And she smiled brightly into the far corner. “Well, I think I'd better inform you right here and now, that the Rebekah Lodge is not a Matrimonial Bureau. No, sir! Nevertheless it might not do for you to propose to me for I might take you at your word if I got really desperate.” The young man ducked his head, the shot told.

“It's all very well for us to laugh when we are young and the world passes by with a nod and a smile, but when one gets *old!*” She raised her hands supplicatingly. “But I shall agitate and keep right on agitating until I get the assurance that the aged and indigent Rebekahs have the hope at least of a home in which to end their days other than that provided by the State. The Rebekahs should have a home with the Odd Fellows, either in public or private; I speak for my own fireside, but I wouldn't refuse a corner in the

Home if it were offered me, so look out!" Amid laughter and hearty applause she resumed her seat. Sister Ward rode her hobby fearlessly, and was all the more popular for so doing. The brothers chaffed her on all occasions, but she gave them as good as they sent, her fund of good nature was inexhaustible.

On the return trip next day, the President had ample opportunity to discuss ways and means for raising money for the Odd Fellows' and Orphans' Home Fund. Some promised to tithe their salaries, thereby giving one tenth of their income to the fund; others spoke of unique entertainments to be given by the various lodges; "My angelic features are to grace a postal card," said Miss Ward. "No brother should be without one." The Grand Secretary suggested that Brother Hayden be urged to write a book, and have the characters Odd Fellows. "Magnificent!" exclaimed President Ward. "Tell him to marry me off in it!" and so the fun continued. Recitations were given, songs sung, plans enough laid to raise a million dollars, and everyone doing his utmost to while away the long hours waiting for the delayed express on the wrong side of Trowbridge Junction.

Years afterwards when the fine Home of the Odd Fellows and Orphans was opened, Past President Ward, still Miss Lucretia Ward, spinster,

was unanimously appointed matron of the institution. "And so," she delighted in saying, "you see the value of agitating. A Rebekah has gotten into the Home. Indeed, I may say, that I am the entering wedge!"

CHAPTER X

“FRIENDSHIP ABOVE ALL TIES DOETH BIND THE
HUMAN HEART ”

THE days are certainly growing longer,” observed Theo Hayden, as she lowered the shades in the music room before turning on the electric light. “Before we know it, spring will be here. I noticed the daffodils’ green tips under the ice in that warm corner near the back porch. Going to read, Micah?”

“Yes, I’m reviewing that special for the *Herald*. Must get it off on the ten o’clock without fail,” and he made his way hurriedly into the library.

Theo seated herself at the grand piano and began to run over the score of a new musical comedy that Micah had just brought home from a recent visit to New York. She was an accomplished musician, vocally and instrumentally. Her voice was a rich contralto which had been carefully trained. Micah’s voice was barytone, and the two were always in great demand for entertainments and musicales. She had just begun

playing the prima donna's first solo when Micah called out from the library:

"Say, Theo, take that song up a bit faster. You don't get the swing somehow. Here, I'll show you." And he came whistling to her side. Theo giggled.

"Brother mine, 'entuse me,' as little Miriam says, but it is laughable the way you run on about that song. 'There are others!'"

"Others? Yes, my dear sister, but there is but one 'Song of the Rose,' I'd have you remember."

"The way you harp on the perfection of that song is simply ridiculous! Now, honor bright, is that actress such a wonder?"

"If she be not fair for me,
What care I how fair she be?"

quoted Micah. "But really, Theo, she certainly is distractingly lovely. Such eyes!"

"Whose eyes?" called out a voice from the hall, and Richard Denman came in, bringing the freshness of the evening.

"Dickie, you're just the one I wanted to see. Come here quickly!" exclaimed Theo excitedly, motioning him to a seat beside her. "I need your legal advice this very minute. Help me to get an order from the court to inquire into Micah's sanity. He's been running on like a raving, tearing lunatic ever since he got home——"

“Blackmail, Dick! Don’t you take any stock in what she says. ‘*It’s all false,*’ as the crowd cried when the whirlwind carried off the lady’s pompadour! But joking aside, I must say that ‘The Quakeress and the Sailor’ is the best production New York has given the public in many a moon.”

“True, most exalted Ruler of the Pen and Ink Brigade,” chipped in Theo. “But the lady who played the *Quakeress*, she of the starry eyes, the faultless nose, the altogether quite too utterly quite too too!” and she gave Richard a comprehensive glance.

“Yes,” joined in Richard. “What of the lady?”

Micah leaned his elbows on the piano and rested his chin in his hands.

“Richard, you should see her! She’s a stunner! Pretty as a peach and as dainty and chic as a little French grisette. Lovely voice. Not as powerful as Theo’s, and more on the mezzo, but has the same richness of quality. You see I must give the devil his due,” and he waved his hand toward Theo, who murmured: “Complimented indeed!”

“And what is her name? Is she some newly discovered star?” asked Richard.

“Yes, she’s new to Broadway, but she’s no novice. Why, she’s taken old New York by storm! Miss Germaine her name is. Want to see the program?” And he thrust his hand in his pocket.

"Mad indeed, quite mad!" said Theo, and she and Richard burst into peals of uncontrollable laughter. With an exaggerated air of deep injury Micah walked toward the door.

"You're a couple of jesters, but I have charity for you. You have never seen her. *Just wait till you do!*" And he began again to whistle the strains of the waltz refrain as he ran upstairs.

Richard settled back in the armchair and fell to studying Theo's face as she took up the little white wool jersey she was knitting for Miriam, and busied herself with the needles. It had been many weeks since they had had an evening alone together. Lodge work had kept him very busy all winter and the court calendar had been a crowded one. He had missed the social evenings at Stonyhurst, the singing and pleasant talks. Well, in a few months his duties as Grand Master would come to an end and the old-time relations would be resumed.

"Anything new, Dickie?" asked Theo, looking up from her work.

"Nothing in particular, except that the twenty-dollar bill continues to come with unfailing regularity on the 7 A.M. every Tuesday."

"Seems to me she must have some employment in New York where she is paid off every Saturday. You know some stenographers get large salaries."

"Yes, that may be so," returned Richard, "but sometimes I find myself wishing that the money

would stop coming. I believe I am getting selfish, for I really wish I could be assured that she never would come for Baby."

"Why, Dick Denman, you, our Grand Master, thinking such a thing, and daring to voice it!" and she shook her finger at him meaningly.

"That does sound heartless, after her letter. But I am certainly very much attached to that wee bunch of humanity, and as for the Duchess"—his pet name for his mother—"why, she is completely bound up in the baby. I wish Mrs. Lawton or Lawson, or whatever her name is, would let us know a little more about herself. However, I'll not attempt to cross any bridges." He covered his perplexed eyes with his hand and sat very still.

Theo, Micah, Uncle Poly, and for that matter, all friends calling at Ledge-lawn, had not failed to notice how completely this little child who had come into the home of the Grand Master and his mother, had wound herself around their hearts and into their lives. The child was radiantly happy in her new relations, a veritable sunbeam shedding brightness everywhere. Theo loved her dearly, and her heart went out in sympathy to Richard and his mother. She moved her chair nearer, and with the familiarity born of close acquaintance, gently drew his hand away from his eyes.

"I didn't mean to hurt you, Dickie; I know just how you love her," she said softly.

The strong hand of the Grand Master closed over her's and held it captive. He felt the force of her sympathy, always responsive to his call. Micah's whistle came nearer as he passed along the hall; pausing a moment by the music-room door, and then going into the library he closed the door after him.

"What is it that's worrying you, Dick? Tell me all about it. It has been a long time since we have had a chance to have one of our real old confabs," she urged, accustomed to his confidences. He smiled as he pressed her hand.

"I just wonder, Theo," he said, regarding her closely, "if you can stay serious long enough for me to ask you a serious question?"

Theo laughed merrily, the old mischievous smile wreathing her lips.

"Well, Dickie, that depends. Now if it is a question that involves mathematics, I may say thee 'Nay'; I always abominated figures. Or if you are going to take me to task about any of my shortcomings, you know we always get into an argument. I don't feel like risking any discussions and possible concussions to-night, so I'll promise to be very good. Now what is it?"

The resolution to strive to end the suspense that had been hanging over him for so many months had come to him, and he determined to try once and for all time to establish their intimacy on a closer basis. He released her hand;

he did not want her to feel that he would take an unfair advantage in the slightest way. Pulling himself together, he began in a voice slightly tremulous with suppressed emotion, his expressive eyes dwelling constantly on her face.

"Theo, ever since we were youngsters, and you, Micah, Clara Strong and I used to play pirates in that old dory down on the beach, you have always been my best girl, the only one in the world for me. I have never thought anything quite complete unless in some way you had a share in it. Listen, Theo, tell me, what can I do to make you love me?" The blood crept into his pale cheeks.

"Is that the question, Dick?" she said wonderingly, her eyes searching his.

"Yes, Theo."

The crucial moment which for two years she had been striving to avert by every maneuver to which a skillful woman can resort had come. She realized its import to them both and the effect was thoroughly subduing. The suddenness of the declaration made her feel a sense of confusion, and it was some moments before she could collect her thoughts. So many memories came rushing to her. It was only too true that she had been the "only girl" for Richard Denman ever since she could remember—they had been the closest and happiest of chums always. She brushed the tears away from her eyes and said earnestly:

"Why, Dickie, you know I love you!" An eager

expression came over the man's face and his eyes grew very bright. He leaned forward, his breath came hard and quick. Theo noticed the change and hastened to add: "You have always been side by side with Micah in my heart, dear. Sometimes I have felt almost a little conscience stricken for fear I loved you better than Micah. You both are just as dear to me as you can be, and when I say I love you I mean it, *but*—" her voice trembled as she spoke the words she knew would dash all his hopes to the ground, so far as possessing her was concerned, "I don't love you in the way you want me to." Then, in feverish haste to try to cover up the wound she saw she had inflicted:

"There is not another man in all my acquaintance whose friendship means to me what yours does, Dick, but I could no more think of marrying you than I could Micah."

His face turned deadly pale.

"Don't take it so much to heart, Dickie; I had hoped you'd gotten over it."

"Over what?" he asked, lifting sad eyes to hers, a shade of impatience coloring his tone. "If you mean that I had conquered my love for you and my desire to make you my wife, well, *no*."

The silence was becoming tense. Theo arose from her chair and went to the window overlooking the garden. She must get control of her feelings for both their sakes. She was becoming hysterical, and it would be fatal to them both if

she gave way. The light in the nursery at Ledge-lawn was shining brightly: Miriam was late about going to bed. That instant all was darkness. Soon Madam's form appeared at the library window, lingered awhile looking out on the night, then the shade was lowered and she disappeared from view. Theo turned, intending to speak. Richard's face was buried in his hands, his elbows resting on his knees. She returned to her seat beside him.

“ Love is not love that fades like a rose,
Roses are born to die! ”

sang Micah as he passed out on his way to the mail train. Theo could hear him still as he went down the steps. She was glad he had gone, the waltz song was beginning to get on her nerves. She laid her hand on Richard's shoulder and said softly:

“ Dick, listen. I want you to know that I should not be the woman you love if I did not sincerely and deeply appreciate the honor you have paid me. It may not be any comfort to you, but I can truly say that I never have cared for anyone as I have for you. Don't let what I have said make any difference in our lives. We have always been such chums.”

The moments went by, and yet the man made no movement, his face still hidden. When at last

he lifted his head and looked straight into the eyes of the woman beside him, his own shone clear and sweet. All the shadows had vanished, his countenance was glorified by the struggle that had tried his very soul.

"Theo!" he began, his voice broke. He paused to gain a better control. "Theo, you are still the dearest girl in all the world to me. You are such a true-blue, right-minded, honest-hearted girl. With all your love of fun, there's nothing of the coquette about you. If I cannot have you for my wife, I can have you for a friend. Truly I don't see how I could get along without you. I have fought a fight with self to-night and I have conquered. You are still my dearest friend, and I thank God for it."

He rose in all his manliness, the old confident expression on his face, and held out his hand to her. She accepted it unhesitatingly.

"Oh, Richard, I am so happy I can hardly speak! Some day you will be glad I did not say what you wanted me to, to-night. The time will come when you will realize as I do that it is all for the best. The love of one's life comes but once. I am not the woman God intended for your wife, but I am very grateful to the Love that is Divine for the friendship of such a good man."

He lifted her hand and reverently pressed it to his lips.

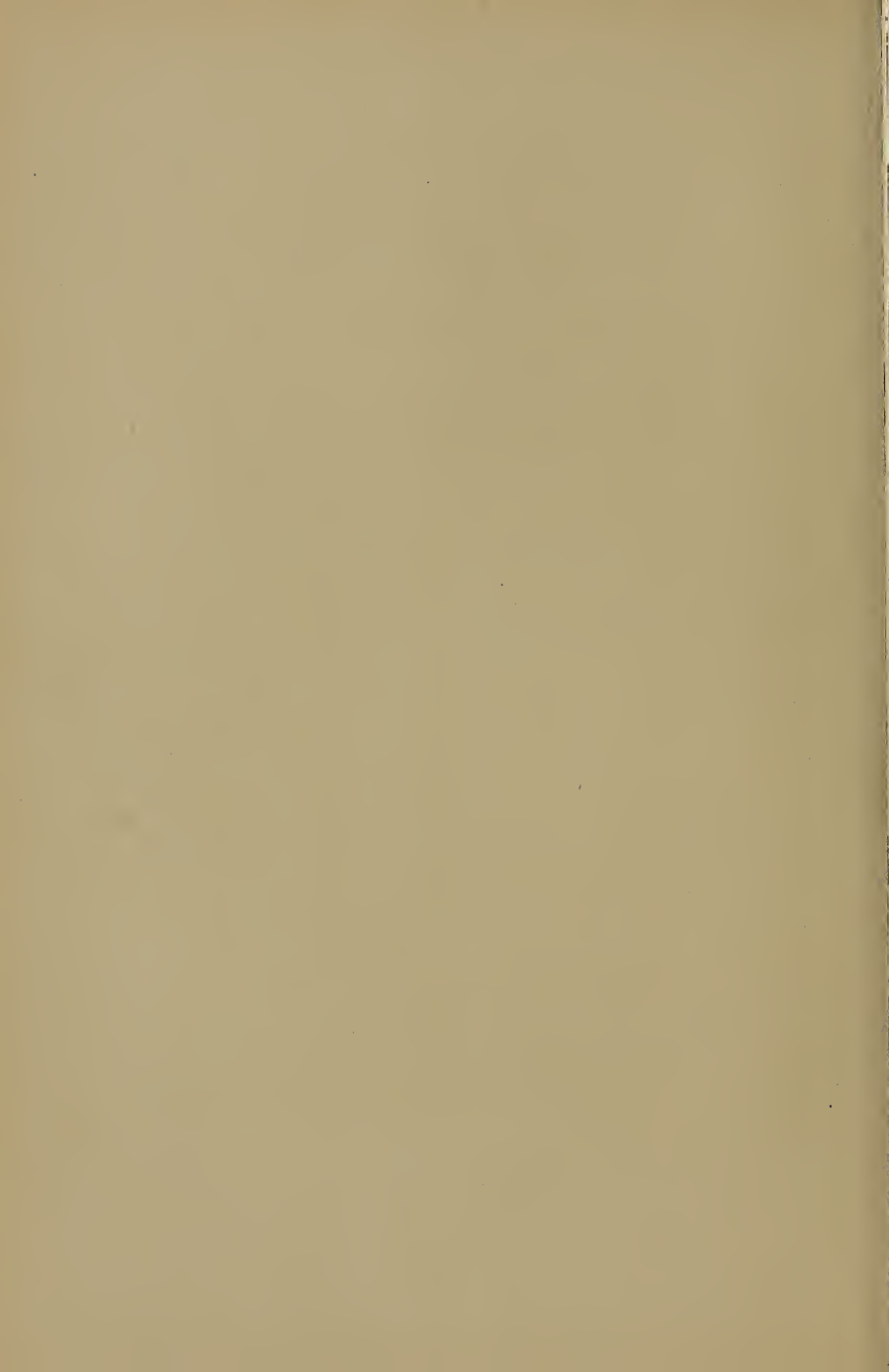
PART SECOND

LOVE

“ True love’s the gift which God hath given,
To man alone beneath the heaven :

.
It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind.”

SIR WALTER SCOTT.



CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF AN ACTRESS

OH, these early spring days in New York, when the lingering frostiness of the passing winter is blended with the soft zephyrs which April brings with her promise of warmer days! The air exhilarates, the sunshine is brilliancy itself. The city parks, like oases in a desert, are resplendent with beds of gorgeous tulips, daffodils, and the more modest crocus. Vying with Nature comes the spectacle of Easter week, that carnival of fashion. It is four o'clock on a Friday afternoon, and the tide of humanity is flowing in never-ceasing waves down Fifth Avenue. From the Park with its horseback riders cantering along the bridle path, the steady stream of fine equipages bowling along the drive, the white-capped nurses guiding the perambulators of the infant millionaires, to the throng of shoppers, promenaders and sight-seeing tourists on Broadway and the Avenue, all is life, life filled to the brim with the joy-giving draughts of the intoxicating air of spring in gay New York. No other place is like it the whole world over.

The beauty of the day was reflected in the face of Bettina Germaine as she wended her way along Fifth Avenue. Many a head was turned to watch her as she walked rapidly along. She wore a becoming costume of blue and a large hat with nodding plumes of the same rich shade.

"Who is that girl in blue?" asks more than one promenader of his companion. If he is a typical New Yorker, and as such a frequenter of the attractions of the Great White Way, the ready reply is:

"Why, that's Bettina Germaine, the little Quakeress at the Lyric. She's the brightest star on Broadway."

Bettina felt the charm of these warm days, harbingers of summer; they were more bracing to her than the crispest winter breezes, for were they not forerunners of the time when she would be free? Free to leave the mimic life, and live in her own sweet thought for a few weeks at least. The winter had passed so quickly it seemed hardly a month since the dull rainy morning that greeted her on her return from Maine, and yet the calendar had numbered nearly seven months since she first appeared in the principal rôle in "The Quakeress and the Sailor," and scored an instantaneous success. Her salary was a large one, and the twenty-dollar bill she sent each week to the Grand Master for Miriam seemed to serve to lessen the feeling of distance between them. She had just

dispatched to Maine a package containing dainty summer garments, and a snowy white Bunny, a souvenir of Easter for Miriam, and her mind was dwelling on the memory of the Grand Master's voice. She fell to wondering, as she often did, under what circumstances they would meet, for a meeting was inevitable, should she ever claim her little daughter. A voice at her elbow startled her from her reverie. She paused and turned slightly, to meet the smiling face of John Worthington Garland, or Jack Garland, as his intimates called him.

"And how is Miss Germaine to-day?" he inquired, lifting his hat and adapting his step to hers.

"Very well, indeed, thank you," she replied. "What an enthusiastic house we had last night, didn't we?"

"Uproarious is the better term, to my mind. Those football teams always wake things up. I hope no one troubled you after the show?" And he looked anxiously in her face. "That young chap who got the rose had to defend his right to it in the lobby. There was a regular scrimmage. I thought at one time we'd have to call in the police."

"Oh, I'm sorry! I always try to throw it to some lady, but the boys were so cordial, and that group I threw it into seemed more gentlemanly than the others."

"You got home all right?"

"Yes, indeed. There were a few Johnnies around the stage door, but Milly and I just walked right by. They had no use for us!" And she laughed lightly.

"Will a cup of tea tempt you, *Friend Cecelia?*" he asked, addressing her by the name she bore in the comedy. They were just passing the Waldorf. Bettina shook her head.

"It is not that I am afraid of 'Your villainous demi-tasses,' as the song goes," and she gave him an arch glance from under her long lashes, "but I seldom indulge between meals. You know I am a very methodical person. Oh, I am, you needn't smile! To-night I am in somewhat of a hurry, as I have something I want to do before going to the theater, and it is now five. Thank you for the thought. It is like you."

His face flushed with pleasure. He wondered if she really meant what she said, and if she was in earnest about getting home early. He didn't like to think that she would prevaricate; his experience with women had impressed him with the ease with which they did such things, but Miss Germaine had always seemed different from any woman he had known. The mental atmosphere about her was free from affectation or deceit.

"Then may I walk home with you?" he ventured to ask, bending upon her his most gracious

smile, his strong white teeth gleaming from beneath the white mustache.

“Why certainly, if you like. But I shall not ask you in.”

“As thou desireth, so be it, little Quakeress.” And again he fell to wondering why this seeming avoidance; and yet he knew that he was foolish to indulge in such suspicions, for she had given him much of her time these past weeks sitting for her portrait painted in the Quaker costume. The picture was finished and the morrow was the day set for placing it in its frame.

The picture should have been finished two weeks ago, but he had taken the work leisurely, from choice; he liked to talk to her and he liked to hear her voice speaking to him. Truth was, he felt decidedly attracted toward this little woman whose hair with its bluish shadows had been the despair of the artist. She had stimulated his ambition and aroused in him a more healthful thought regarding his work. He knew he had fallen into a morbid strain and was glad of this awakening to higher ideals.

What a surprise she had been to everyone but Sam! Wise old Sam Williams; he knew she would make good, and she had. She sang like a bird, danced like a sylph, and her speaking voice, the greatest charm in woman, was like the chime of silver bells. Everyone liked her, from the box office to the stage door, and yet off the stage she

was always the same quiet, sweet-tempered little woman, seldom relaxing her dignity. He wondered what there was that kept her different from the other women of her class. She never accepted invitations out to supper; no "joy rides" for her; even a pious cup of tea at the Waldorf could not tempt her. It mystified him, and he wished he knew the reason for it all. For the present it gratified his vanity to be seen with her on the Avenue, and he purposely slackened his pace.

"I may count on your attending my reception next Tuesday when your portrait is to be viewed by the world of Art and Fashion?" His voice was expectant. "You received the card of invitation yesterday, did you not?"

"Yes, I received it, thank you. It is very daintily gotten up," she replied, ignoring his first question.

"But will you come?" he repeated, as he moved closer to her side, resting his hand lightly on her elbow as they crossed the street.

Bettina was sorely perplexed. This very thing had been troubling her ever since he announced his intention of giving a select few the privilege of viewing the portrait in his studio before it was placed on public exhibition in the lobby of the theater. She had never mingled with the "smart set." Invitations without number had been received. Notes had come to her almost nightly from the first week of her appearance; and the

flowers, baskets of fruit, and presents that found their way to her dressing room at the theater plainly indicated that many sought to ingratiate themselves with the popular actress. When cards accompanied the presents, some of which were of intrinsic value, she had returned them through Mr. Williams, the business manager, who, with Jones, the crusty old stage manager, seemed to understand her better than anyone else. They both had shown from the first that they were anxious to advance her professionally, and as well to protect her in private whenever and wherever they could.

She was sincere when she said she had no use for any other enjoyment than the regular routine of her daily life. Her one aim and ambition was to be successful and to lay by money for the future. All her personal affairs she guarded jealously; no reporter had ever gained for publication a single item of her private life. But this reception! She quite understood that she was expected to attend, and be exhibited, so to speak, along with the picture. She did not reply, and he again repeated his question, his voice betraying slight impatience. "The whole thing would be as flat as the proverbial pancake, if you were not there," he added.

Finally being cornered, she gathered herself together for a final refusal. They had reached the

apartment house where she made her home and were standing on the sidewalk by the entrance.

"I certainly appreciate all your thought implies, and perhaps you cannot understand why I do not care to be there"; she hesitated and looked up at him. "Isn't the portrait quite enough?" she stammered, the color coming and going in her cheeks.

His brown eyes turned almost black with disappointment; he had feared a refusal, and his pride was touched. If she were not so essential to the piece he was backing heavily, he would make it his business to have her understand a thing or two; but he knew coercion would never do with Miss Germaine, she was too high-spirited, and too valuable to the success of his money venture for him to risk offending her.

Bettina saw the look of resentment and felt regretful. She did not want to offend him, he had been too kind to her in many ways, and she was not ungrateful.

"Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Garland," she pleaded. "If you knew how I positively dread social gatherings of that sort I am sure you would not urge me." She raised her pansy eyes to his while that sweet, ingenuous, magnetic smile overspread her face—the smile that went over the footlights and held the audience captive. He could not hold out against the power of that smile. All

signs of displeasure vanished. He held her hand in parting, and pressing it gently, whispered:

"Think it over, *Friend Cecelia*. I must admit you rather dashed my hopes to the ground, but think it over, and be as kind as thou art fair, little Quakeress."

She shook his hand cordially.

"Don't count on my coming, please. I seldom change my mind, and I am sure I shall not in this case. Good-by." And she passed within.

Hailing a taxicab he told the man to drive to the Lyric Theater. He would just have time to catch Sam before he went home to dinner. He must have a little talk with him about Miss Germaine. As he leaned back and lighted a cigarette, he tried to think why it was that he had not been as successful in having his way with Miss Germaine as he usually was with most women. "She's a strange combination. Just like the part she plays; in private life the demure little Quakeress, and on the stage the most alluring of dancing girls. We must be sure of her for next season. Williams must see about that contract right away—to-night, if it can be arranged." And he drew off his gloves, arranging them with care, placing them in his breast pocket with the tips up. "I'll give Sam a line to work on, and perhaps he'll get at the reason for this exclusiveness. She'll tell him quicker than anyone else." Then the cab drew up to the curb and he hurried into the theater.

CHAPTER II

BEHIND THE SCENES

THE call had just gone out for the last act as Business Manager Williams came rushing behind the scenes. His eyes searched the group of chorus girls and men standing in the wings waiting for the call of the stage manager to take their places. The orchestra was playing the final strains of the *entre'acte* music as *Friend Cecelia* appeared. She did not go on until after the first scene, but she never tired of the light, bright music, and she liked to watch the house. Tonight it was packed and her reception had been more enthusiastic than ever. The manager beckoned her to one side.

"Something doing, all right, all right," whispered a chorus girl to the comedian. "Wonder what the old man wants with Germaine? She's solid with him." And she gave an insinuating look to another girl standing near. The woman laughed and winked knowingly. The comedian gave a hitch to his sailor trousers as he retorted:

"You're a couple of jealous little cats! What has Germaine ever done to you for you to slur her

so? She's a brick, let me tell you! When Jackson's wife got hurt—you remember she was in that accident to the trolley on 125th Street last week?—Germaine went up and helped Jacky with the housework, got in a woman to look after the children, and forked over the dough for them to keep the woman until Lil could get back to work. I'd never known about it only Jacky told me. Believe me, she's on the level. Now *beat it!*" And they hurried to their entrances.

"*Friend Cecelia*, your cue," said the call boy, approaching Miss Germaine, who had been in close conversation with Mr. Williams for the last ten minutes. She turned to respond to the call.

"Then I'll make it half after?" asked Mr. Williams.

"Yes, that will give me plenty of time, thank you," returned Bettina, as she stepped to her entrance at the back of the stage.

Mr. Williams left by the side door and ran quickly around to the front of the house. It was his custom to be in front for her appearance in the last act when she comes bounding in on the stage as the dancing girl who had masqueraded as a prim little Quakeress. Her entrance was always the signal for a hearty round of applause and he wanted to lend a hand himself. To-night the house rose and demanded encore after encore of the song and the *dance-grotesque* that followed by the pony ballet.

"Best show I've seen in a long time, Garland," was the verdict of a man-about-town to his friend after the performance. "Miss Germaine is the dot on the i, and that's no merry jest." Garland acquiesced in glowing terms, and forthwith extended an invitation for him to come to his studio and view the portrait of Miss Germaine. The man's eyes glistened, he was visibly flattered.

"I'll come with pleasure," placing the invitation in his pocket. "Any ladies bidden?"

"Why, certainly," responded Garland. "Here, take these and give them to the rest of your family. I forget sometimes that you are married and have a daughter in the swim." And they passed out of the lobby to meet later for a bite at the club.

"Milly," said Miss Germaine to her dresser, a trim young colored woman, "I'm going to have something to eat to-night here in the dressing room with Mr. Williams. He wants to have a talk with me. No, I do not want you to go home before I do, we will leave together as usual. What I wanted to say was this, you need not hurry to arrange my costumes, take it leisurely, and no matter what Mr. Williams may say, you remain here unless I tell you to leave. You understand?"

The girl replied in a respectful affirmative, and went on removing the make-up from the actress's face. She had been in Bettina's service since the beginning of the season, and was much attached

to her. Milly came every morning early to Bettina's apartments and prepared the simple meals which she preferred to those served at the hotels and restaurants.

The change to street costume had just been completed when a rap at the door indicated the arrival of the manager accompanied by a waiter from one of the near-by cafés. The latter carried a heavy tray which he deposited on the floor while Milly cleared the star's dressing table. A snowy damask cloth soon covered it, and the plates containing oysters as well as some covered dishes were placed upon it. Then withdrawing for a few moments, the waiter presently reappeared, this time with a cooler in which was a bottle of milk and a syphon of Apollinaris. Bettina noticed with a feeling of gratification that no wine was there. Mr. Williams interpreted her look and chuckled.

"I'll join you in Apollinaris, Miss Germaine, but excuse me when it comes to the lacteal fluid. You are responsible for my having to stand treat all round over there," indicating with a finger the café opposite. "The boys wouldn't take my word that the milk wasn't for the black cat until Pierre packed it in the ice. They swore it was for Nadjy!" And he burst into a hearty laugh in which all joined.

"Pussy and I know what keeps our voices clear and our eyes bright; but I don't wonder that it struck them as a little out of the ordinary for an

actress to order milk to drink at an after-the-theater supper. It must have seemed funny." She drew up a chair to the table. "Shall we begin?"

"Suit yourself," said Mr. Williams. "I've delivered the goods!" as, accepting her invitation, he seated himself opposite. They had begun on the second course when it occurred to Bettina that kitty might enjoy a drink of milk.

"Milly, go find Nadjy and bring her here," she said to the maid.

A coal-black kitten had found its way into the property room the night Bettina made her first appearance, and, owing to her instantaneous success, had been regarded as a mascot ever since. She was a great pet with the cast, and was often found cuddled up asleep on the dressing tables.

As the maid passed out in search of the animal, the manager nodded his head in her direction and asked:

"She's going home, isn't she?"

"Yes, when I go," replied Bettina, in a matter-of-fact tone, as she helped herself to an olive.

The man regarded her with narrowing eyelids. Garland was right, Bettina Germaine was certainly different from the rank and file of stage favorites. But, then, he told himself, with a shrug, he guessed he didn't need Garland to tell him that, no one could give him any pointers on little Germaine. She was always aboveboard, and yet she was no prude. Take Polly Blake, for

instance. Polly was the first to play the part of *Friend Cecelia*, and for all her prestige of a London season, a figure like an artist's model, and a voice fit for grand opera, her interpretation was so suggestive and coarse she almost brought a frost. She hadn't the finesse the part called for.

But Bettina Germaine, his preference from the first, caught on like wildfire from the moment she appeared in the scene of the old garden with her arms full of roses, and sang "The Song of the Rose." Her refined and beautiful personality and the magnetism of her smile went to their heads like champagne! From that moment the success of the piece was assured. Never since Edna May captured New York as the *Salvation Army Lassie* had there been such a success as Miss Germaine, in the part of *Friend Cecelia* in "The Quakeress and the Sailor."

All was very quiet about the big building, the stillness like that of a country home far from the city's throng. The chorus had gone trooping by, laughing and talking on their way out.

Milly came in with the kitten in her arms. Pussy immediately scented the bird, and began to purr and rub against Bettina's dress.

"Give Nadjy some milk, Milly, and you finish the bird. Have you finished, Mr. Williams?" He bowed, moving away from the table.

"With your permission, Miss Germaine, I'd like to smoke. Somehow I can always talk

business better when I have a cigar between my teeth."

"Certainly, Mr. Williams. Just lower the window"—this to Milly—"then the smoke will pass out."

His cigar lighted, the manager felt more at ease and without further preliminaries began at once upon the subject of the next season's plans. Finally they reached the possibility of changes in the cast. These were discussed at length. Then touching on the renewal of their contract, he observed:

"Now, Miss Germaine, Mr. Garland and I have talked the matter over and recognizing that you have made the piece the success it is to-day, we have decided to raise your salary fifty per for next season. How does that strike you?" and he regarded her critically through half-shut eyes.

She rested her arm on the table and toyed with her finger rings. What a temptation money is! One must have it in order to live; she hardly knew what to say or what to do. Her heart was hungry for the companionship of her baby girl. There had been a tugging at her heart-strings all day. The life of an actress left little time for the pleasures of home. If she remained with this company, the next season would be spent on the road, and that meant a still longer separation. She felt the manager's eyes watching her, yet she could not seem to find words to express her feel-

ings. There was no other way than to tell him the truth. Why not? It could stand, and she must not be afraid. With her eyes still regarding her rings she said:

"I've been thinking of giving up musical comedy."

"You've been *what?*" exclaimed the man, not crediting what he had heard.

"I've been thinking of giving up musical comedy," she repeated, sighing audibly.

The man started. Was the girl losing her mind? "*Thinking of giving up musical comedy,*" she, the talk of the town, whose name at this very moment was blazing in letters five feet high in the electric sign over the playhouse entrance! And sitting there apparently as calm as the plaster Cupid over the proscenium arch saying that she was thinking of giving it all up! What could be the matter with the woman? He turned his head uneasily in his high collar, he felt hot in that locality; it was enough to arouse any man's anger. "Confound it," he muttered under his breath, "Garland was right after all—there *was* something in the wind, some manager of a rival playhouse may have approached her with a flattering offer; it was up to him now to sift the whole matter to the bottom. Placing his cigar across a tumbler, he leaned his arms heavily on the table before him and in slow, deliberate tones opened fire:

"I'll have to ask you if you will oblige me by letting in a little more light on that last remark of yours, Miss Germaine. I can't seem to see just what you mean by it, although what you said was clear enough." Then irascibly: "Why in the devil do you want to cut out the whole business and quit? Haven't we given you a square deal?" he snapped as he fidgeted about in his chair, crossing and uncrossing his legs. He eyed the maid dozing in her chair by the window, the mascot asleep in her lap.

Bettina Germaine realized fully that she was under obligations to a certain extent, to both Mr. Williams and Mr. Garland, and certainly owed them allegiance. They must know that she intended to "play fair." It was always difficult for her to speak of her personal affairs, especially to a comparative stranger, but no other way seemed open to her. It was only right that he should know the true reason. She turned away from the table, and with her eyes cast down began speaking:

"Mr. Williams, as the heroines say, 'May I tell you the story of my life'? I think if you will permit me to do so, it will make my attitude plainer to you."

He ran his fingers around his collar before answering. Her tone somehow reassured him.

"In that case," he said, "go ahead," lighting a match by drawing it under the table, "but get

back to the present as soon as you can. Do you know, for a featherweight you gave me a pretty good jolt a few minutes ago, and," lighting a fresh cigar, "I haven't got my breath yet." He smiled out of one corner of his mouth, a way he had when he felt annoyed and yet wanted to appear pleasant. Having assured himself that his cigar was all right, he tipped back in his chair, folded his arms, and assuming a listening attitude said:

"Ring her up, Miss Germaine, the audience waits."

CHAPTER III

BETTINA TELLS HER STORY

MY problem is, I am quite sure, far different from what you think, Mr. Williams, and while it is my wish to unburden my mind to you, I hope and believe you will respect my confidence, and that neither you nor Mr. Garland will ever speak of it to anyone, especially newspaper men. There are reasons why I prefer keeping my identity a secret, for a time at least."

He bowed his allegiance.

"I was born in Washington," she continued. "My father was Frederic Germaine, the well-known tenor—you probably have heard of him. He was very popular as a concert singer."

Mr. Williams nodded. "I've heard him many a time. That's where you get the voice all right."

"He died when I was fourteen years old. We were living in Denver at the time, as my mother was inclined to lung trouble. My life had always been a very happy one. I had a visiting governess, as neither of my parents cared to have me go to a school, so my education was conducted under the immediate supervision of my mother. We

were a very happy family, Mother, Martha Graham, my nurse (but in those days my mother's companion), and I. I was just sixteen when my dear mother passed away." She paused for a moment, then went bravely on with her story. "I had no near relatives; my closest friends were Martha and Mr. Josiah Lawton, a newspaper man, a near friend of my parents. He it was who advised me how to care for the little inheritance I received, and helped me to plan for the future. I was very ambitious, and so it was thought best that I should remain in Denver and go on with my musical education, and become in time a church and concert singer, as my father had been before me. But Fate willed it otherwise, at least for a time, for friendship ripened into love, and on my eighteenth birthday I became Mr. Lawton's wife. He was much older than I, a man of superior attainments, very kind and loving, and we had much in common. At his request Martha remained with us as a member of the family, and after our little daughter came assumed the entire care of her, so that I could go on with my music, which we both enjoyed so much.

"One night my husband came home in great haste. An assignment had been given him and he must leave at once for San Francisco." She opened her chatelaine bag and drawing out a handkerchief wiped the tears from her eyes. Mr. Williams coughed sympathetically and said in a sub-

dued tone, desiring to help her overcome a trying situation:

"Went away, did he, and never came back?"

She bowed her head, suppressing a sob. So that was it, he thought, and she probably got a divorce after the required time had passed. He would find out. In a voice calculated to be very solicitous he said:

"And so you are a widow. May I inquire if it is sod or grass?"

With difficulty she controlled her voice to whisper the one word, "Dead."

The tears trickled down her cheeks, she was much shaken by the brief recital of her short but happy married life. To see moisture in those eyes that only a few hours ago were flashing with merriment thoroughly aroused his sympathies. Her grief was genuine, sincere. He began to reproach himself for having spoken in such an uncouth way. He deserved a thrashing, he observed mentally. Then aloud:

"I didn't mean it unkindly, Miss Germaine—forget it! 'Frisco earthquake, was it?" A spasmodic gesture told him that his inference was correct. "Hard lines, little woman; but after that, what came?"

She straightened up in her chair and dashed the remaining tears from her eyes. The past was gone, in the present she must live for Miriam's sake. A fleeting glance at the round fat face

opposite, only kindness radiating from it, and the sight of the half-smoked cigar on the window sill, showed her that her grief was respected. Rising to the occasion, she suppressed her emotion and went on with her story.

"My husband was an Odd Fellow standing high in the Order. He had been Noble Grand of his lodge and was regarded universally with respect. The Odd Fellows and Rebekahs (I am a member of the Rebekah Lodge) did everything possible to help me bear my sorrow. I received the greatest manifestations of love and the desire to make my way smoother from all connected with the Order. Finally I decided to come East and see about a church position. In the house where I boarded was an actress who heard me sing, and it was through her assistance that I went on the stage and afterwards came to you.

"Of course Martha and the baby came East with me, but I left them in Maine on the old farm where Martha's brother lived. It was to go to her in her last illness that I left the company in October." He bowed. "Now Miriam is with total strangers, and I do so want to have her near me. If I keep on with you I cannot, as it would not be possible to take so young a child upon the road." She smoothed the hair away from her eyes as she looked up. She felt a weight lifted from her mind and heart now that he knew all.

Manager Williams drew a deep breath and

pursed up his lips. He was so pleased he felt like smiling. No rival managers had come on the scene, that was evident. And she wanted the baby with her! Well, well, she surely was unique to the limit; most actresses would prefer to keep their offspring as far from sight and hearing as possible. He thought he could see a way to adjust the matter to their mutual satisfaction. Accordingly he let down his chair, drew his hands from his pockets, and with a countenance freed from perplexed frowns, said:

"Now you don't need to worry a bit, Miss Germaine—I call you by that name, although I sha'n't forget that you are Mrs. Lawton. Let's get down to business. I want to ask you a few questions. If you don't mind, how old is your child?"

Bettina thought a moment.

"She is in her fourth year, Mr. Williams. I had to stop and reckon back."

"Pretty bright, isn't she?" he questioned.

"Oh, yes! She could talk at two years almost as plainly as I do," and Bettina laughed a rippling, musical laugh, her spirits rising. "She's as bright as a star and a very pretty child."

The manager clapped his hands. "I'll gamble on that if she's your baby. There's an unexpected bouquet for you, my dear!" Actresses are always "my dear" to their managers, and he bowed as he threw an imaginary bouquet to her. Then

continuing: "Now, tell me, what do you purpose doing if you turn us down?"

She pressed her hands close together under the table. If he could only understand how little the glory of being the bright particular star of the most successful production of the season meant to her! She turned the plain gold ring on the third finger of her left hand round and round in her perplexity. How many there were who would give years of their lives for the very opportunity she was so eager to refuse. Her heart throbbed wildly, and her cheeks burned like fire. The hour was getting late and she must delay no longer. Why should she hesitate? She was a free agent, she could act as seemed best to her, and it must be settled sooner or later.

"You see," she stammered, "I want a home. A place where I can have Miriam. I want to have the joy of watching her little life as it changes from one age to another; she will never be a baby but once. The stage life is all one to me: it does not matter what part I play so long as I please the public and my salary is paid. Then," with sudden resolution, "to be frank, I had thought of going into a stock company where I could be in one place the entire season."

Mr. Williams scowled, rose quickly, and took a turn about the room. Milly was sound asleep in her chair, her head on her breast. He looked at his watch: it was past midnight. He fully real-

ized that Miss Germaine would be a very valuable member of any resident stock company, as she was versatile and her reputation would be worth paying for. By hook or by crook she must be retained. He would probe further. Coming close to her he said in a determined voice:

"*Stock company*, eh? I'd like to know if you've given much thought as to what that means? Two performances a day and rehearsals on Sunday!" he snorted. "And throw aside the prestige of all the glory you have had literally heaped upon you this season. Now don't be a blamed idiot, girl! Where's your common sense? You can't plan for yourself any more than a child!" Then softening: "I guess you are tired and need to go into the country for a rest. I know I do. This life is a strenuous one. Now look here, and for God's sake don't cry—I can't stand it." As she wiped her eyes with her moist handkerchief. "You can have all you want, and more too, if you'll just let me have my say. Drop all this stock business, just put the reins in my hands and I'll drive home a winner, and you just see me do it!" He seated himself astride of his chair, his arms folded on the back, a grim smile overspreading his face.

"Yesterday I signed the contract for a season of sixteen weeks for 'The Quakeress and the Sailor' in Boston at the Tremont beginning Labor Day. Then a move to the Garrick at Chicago for the remainder of the season. Only eight perform-

ances a week, six evenin' and two matinées. That beats your old stock all to smithereens! Now don't say a word till I've finished," and he raised his hand protestingly. "Now, as to what we will do by you. We will agree to pay the same salary you have been receiving, and raise it fifty per beginning September 1st. Now don't you think I'm forgetting that precious baby. I've had her in my mind from the first, and don't you forget it, little Mother! I'll guarantee that Garland will agree—he'll do anything in reason to keep you in the cast—to pay the expenses of Milly or any other girl you want to help you to take care of the baby. You can get a furnished apartment in Boston and keep house while playing there, and you can do the same thing in Chicago. Now, there you are, fine as silk, or I'm no judge." He stopped abruptly and regarded her with triumph in his eyes.

She sank back in her chair. He knew he had won the day, for her face was radiant. The sunshine of hope had dispelled all clouds, and her great blue eyes shone like pansies wet with dew. Her whole being was vibrating with the joy his words awakened in her. *Better than stock?* A million times better, she told herself. Oh, it would not take her long to pack up her trunks and start for Maine, once the season closed! She stretched out both hands toward him. She was too happy to speak. He took the slim little hands in his big ones and shook them warmly.

"Your hand on it, eh?" he said gravely. "It is a bargain, then?"

"Yes, the contract is as good as signed," she returned, rising. He rose to his feet and gave himself a shake. This was trying work, managing a popular actress. Yet she was worth all it cost him.

"Now just stand by us for another year anyway, and we'll help you pile up the ducats for your daughter." A sheepish grin wrinkled his fat face as he said: "I have a fellow-feeling for you, Miss Germaine. I've a little girl at home, same age as yours, and she's the apple of my eye." He took up his hat and moved toward the door. "I'll call up a taxi for you. It is too late for you two women to be out alone. Come down to the office when you're ready. Better take the cab from the front—stage door is locked by this time."

Bettina aroused the sleeping girl and together they made their way through the dimly lighted auditorium to the sidewalk where the cab was in waiting.

That night Business Manager Williams kissed his little girl as she lay sleeping in her crib, a proceeding that greatly mystified Mrs. Williams.

"I hope he isn't going to be sick," she thought. "He never did such a thing before. I must ask the doctor to give him a tonic."

CHAPTER IV

JOHN WORTHINGTON GARLAND

AFTER the portrait of Miss Germaine, in her character of *Friend Cecelia* had been gazed at, commented upon, praised for its beauty, and the popularity of the fair subject discussed over the teacups, on that memorable Tuesday in the studio of Mr. John Worthington Garland, it was removed to the lobby of the theater there to remain until the close of the season.

The picture was attracting wide attention, aside from the prominence of the subject. Art circles were waking up to the fact that it was the first piece of work of any real merit that had come from the Garland Studio for many months. Time was when he had been regarded as an artist of more than ordinary attainments; even genius was hinted at. His imagination soared to lofty heights and from his brush grew sketches that foreshadowed fame.

Possessed of wealth inherited from his paternal grandfather, for whom he was named, he gratified his love for music and art to the fullest extent both in this country and abroad, where he re-

mained several years, principally in the Latin Quarter of Paris, studying and indulging his every desire. Five years ago on his return to his native land he was a changed man in many ways. His studio was still open as of old to critic and friend alike, but the old enthusiasm was lacking; the fire of genius smoldered low and almost flickered out. His brush was seldom taken up except for sketch work—a ballet girl poised lightly on her toes, or girl with foil in fencing attitude. He spent much time at the clubs, and at the theater on opening nights he was always a prominent figure. No picture worthy of the name of Art had come from his hand until the portrait of Miss Germaine aroused the press and public to praise the subject and the work. Many wondered as to the cause that had turned his hair to snowy white, but he was ever reticent and self-contained about all affairs touching his private life. The way it came about was this:

The last year he spent abroad, he had just returned from a sketching tour in Brittany, and once back in Paris had plunged deep into the vortex of life the gay capital affords for those who seek the lure the senses of the worldly crave. The theaters, opera, and café, the races and attractions of suburban house-parties were indulged in without stint. One night on returning from a coaching tour, he sought his apartment a trifle earlier than was his custom, and sitting beside the

window watched the passing throng far into the night. Drowsiness overpowered him and he fell asleep in his chair and dreamed.

It seemed to him that he was in an old-fashioned garden, where roses grew in wild profusion with no attempt to guide them, and in that same garden stood a maiden fair; her figure slight yet modeled on perfection's lines was clothed in draperies of palest gray, cloudlike they appeared to be. Her hair, drawn back in waving lines from a low, artistic brow, was black as night and bluish in the shadows; the bloom of health was on her cheeks; her lips, rosebud-like unfolding, smiled at him, and from her eyes so darkly, deeply, wondrously blue, the light of Love shone forth like a guiding star. She came toward him with roses in her hands and said in a voice that thrilled his very soul: "'Love is ever the gift, the sacrifice of self.' Awake! Cast from you all that holds you bound to sordid sensuality, and rise to loftier heights and nobler realizations of your part in the great drama of Life."

He opened wide his eyes. The sun was shining brightly, day had dawned. He quickly closed his eyes to try and tempt the vision back again. Then, feverish with haste, he took his palette and sitting at his easel tried to paint the picture of his dream. The garden grew, the roses seemed to exhale perfume, so real did they become beneath the magic of his brush, but when he tried to paint

the features of the sweet maiden standing by the moss-covered sun-dial, his skill was powerless to portray the image of his dream. All day he worked to reproduce in some degree the beauty of her face so rare, but all in vain. It was too ethereal for his imagination to depict. His brush fell from his hand. . . .

Then followed days of illness in which he raved, and in delirium he would try to reach his easel, only to fall back upon his couch in weakness and despair. Health came at last, but with it oblivion complete of that sweet dream. The sketch was put aside as something of whose scene and subject he had no memory.

It was not until the night when in the first scene of "The Quakeress and the Sailor," Miss Germaine, as *Friend Cecelia*, appeared in gown of gray with roses in her hands, that the old fire of enthusiasm burst into a living flame, and the picture of his dream came back to him. It was all quite vague, very indistinct, and yet he knew it was the solution of his idle past, and so he came to love the portrait as though it were a thing of life, because through it he had regained his manhood and ambition.

CHAPTER V

THE PASSING OF *FRIEND CECELIA*

THE Quakeress and the Sailor" continued to draw such crowded houses that the run could have gone on with profit during the summer months, but the first week in June saw the end of the metropolitan season. Souvenirs of the two hundred and eightieth performance distributed to the audience on the closing night were in the form of photographs of the prima donna as *Friend Cecelia*. The house was packed to the very doors, flowers in profusion were handed over the footlights, and the curtain fell after many recalls of the favorites. Everybody was happy, from the managerial staff to the scene shifters; a successful season had closed in a blaze of glory and electric light.

The days that followed were so full that Bettina did not notice or realize their flight. A new set of costumes for the fall season necessitated many visits to the dressmaker, and her own wardrobe needed replenishing. At last the day came when she felt the bonds that bound her to the city falling from her, and she began with earnestness

preparations for the journey to Maine. She was as light-hearted and happy as a child while she emptied the bureau drawers and the closets of their contents, carefully folded each article, and packed all her belongings in the trunks. The stage with its smell of paint and dust, noise of shifting scenes, the odor of cigarettes from the dressing rooms, the strains of music and the applause from the front, had gone from her mind as completely as if such things had never been a part of her daily life. In their places came the breath of summer air floating through the open window, telling of green fields, fleecy clouds, the cool shade under trees in the village streets, and a little girl with nodding curls bright as spun gold where the sun touched them. It did not seem as though she could wait until midnight when the express would leave for Boston.

The bell rang—her costumes were home, on time. She laughed aloud in excess of joy as she opened the trunks marked "THEATER" and placed them within. Then she threw down each cover, turned the key, and shut out all reminders of the mimic life until she should open them in September. From now on for more than six beautiful weeks she would live! She refused absolutely to make plans. She would go day by day along the way. First to Boston, then to Norwood, and *then*—again the door bell!

Who could it be? She glanced in the mirror on

her way to the hall. Her hair was in disorder, she smoothed it back from the temples and tying the ribbons of her negligee around her waist, opened the door. There on the threshold, looking exceedingly debonair in his light summer suit and straw hat, stood Mr. Garland, and beside him his bull terrier, Kim.

“Good morning, Miss Germaine, *Friend Cecelia* that used to be. I know it is very unconventional, calling at this unseemly hour, but you may blame Kim for it. I simply couldn’t get him by the house—he *would* come in.” Holding his hat in his left hand he extended his right in greeting. The dog, ears up and tail wagging, slipped past them into the parlor and began growling at the fox-skin rug.

“I had no idea I should see you again: I thought we made our farewells over the telephone wire last night,” said Bettina, leading the way into the front room.

“I am told telephone messages do not stand in law, and, after all, it is such a pleasure to see our friends face to face,” he replied, looking at her in frank admiration. “Then you know Kim had no part in that telephone conversation. Did you, Kim? You see, he says ‘No’ very plainly. If you have any doubts as to his wanting to come here this morning, why, just ask him!” And they laughed merrily, Kim joining in with a quick yelp and vigorous wags of his expressive little tail.

"Do you really leave New York to-night?" he asked.

"Yes," she declared delightedly, "on the 12.03 by way of New London. I'm so happy I can hardly sit still. You know I am going to see my little daughter," she added, the mother-love shining in her eyes. The dog came to her side and laid his head in her lap, his eyes regarding her steadfastly. Mr. Garland smiled.

"Of course Mr. Williams told me—he was obliged to do so on account of the new arrangements, I should not have spoken of it, however, had you not first done so. It was somewhat of a surprise to me." He thought how very young she looked in the simple soft silk gown with its fur-belowes of lace and ribbon, her hair piled high upon the shapely head. It was difficult for him to picture her as the mother of a child, there was so much of the dewy freshness of youth about her.

"Oh, I wanted him to tell you. It was only right that you should know. And may I stay away until the last week in August?" she asked, smoothing the dog's head.

"Why, by all means. Take all that is given you. Sam and I talked it over and we do not think you need report for rehearsals until the last two; that will give you almost ten extra days, for Labor Day does not come until the fifth. Miss Lawrence can take your part; it will be good prac-

tice for her, in case we put another company on the road this year."

"How good of you!" she clapped her hands excitedly. "And I am glad, too, that Ruth Lawrence should have a better chance given her than that of the under-study of an actress who is never indisposed. She sings the score beautifully, and I am sure will act the part as well as I do."

Mr. Garland raised his brows slightly. Miss Lawrence was a very promising little actress, but she was not Miss Germaine.

"Oh, Ruth will come into her own at the right time, never you fear. So plan to take your ease up to the third, and then report at 9.30 sharp at the box office. I shall be there and shall want to see you before the others come. You know you never have signed the contract for next season. But it is only a matter of form with you, after all."

Her face was all aglow. He liked to watch the changing expressions. As he told a brother artist who was admiring the portrait, the only satisfactory picture of Bettina Germaine would be a moving picture.

A dog's bark sounded in the street. Kim forsook his attitude of adoration at Miss Germaine's knee, scrambled up on a chair, and was answering from the open window, his head bending low.

"Where do you and Kim spend the summer?"

"Oh, Kim goes this afternoon with mother and the girls to our camp in the Adirondacks. Later,

Bessie and her husband are going with me to Maine on the new yacht."

She started at the word "Maine," then quickly came the comforting thought that Maine was a large state, having a long seacoast; no fear of his coming anywhere near Norwood.

"Now I remember, you told me you were having a yacht built; what have you named her?" she asked, and then for some unaccountable feeling, wished she had not been so inquisitive.

"There is only one name for me, and if you will permit me, I will call her 'Friend Cecelia.' I am disappointed that you will not be able to attend the christening. I wish it might be arranged."

Bettina felt the delicacy of the compliment, and colored rosily. It really was good of him to wish to so perpetuate the character she had taken in the comedy.

"Yes, indeed, I approve. It will be a novel and a pretty name as well," she said. "You can call me the Fairy Godmother and I'll visit the boat in my dreams." She looked at him as he sat intently regarding his immaculate shoes, and wondered what was passing in his mind.

"Oh, I have an idea!" he exclaimed.

"How wonderful!" she laughed. "Let's have it, quick!"

"I wonder if it can be carried out?" he said musingly. Then drawing in his feet and sitting

erect added: "If you will delay your journey a few days you can see the yacht on a trip to Maine. You like Mrs. Tilton, and she thinks you are very nice. Billy is a first-rate companion on a cruise and the sea air will do you lots of good. What do you say?"

Her face grew sober instantly. It was entirely out of the question.

"Why, I'm going to-night. I have my section engaged and my ticket in my bag. I know it would be a perfectly charming trip, and I think you are more than kind to wish me to go; but if you only knew how anxious I am to get to Miriam!" She looked at him appealingly. "I'm so sorry to refuse!"

His eyes clouded, but he made no comment, simply smiled, and looking toward the open door of the adjoining room where the trunks were to be seen, asked: "Are there any for storage?"

"Yes, there are two theater trunks and one hotel trunk; the other, the large one, unmarked, I take with me."

"All packed?"

"Yes, and locked."

"Then I will send our man for the storage trunks this afternoon, and if you approve, he can take the one that goes with you, to the station at the same time. Will it be of any assistance to you?" He was eager to help her in any way that lay in his power.

"Thank you, that is kind."

"And now I wonder if you will not be kinder and go for lunch with me? I'll go wherever you prefer. I'll take Kim to the house and return by the time you can be ready. Won't you come? There is a long summer ahead of me and I'm bound to miss you."

There was a long pause. The dog jumped down from the window seat and trotted into the next room to inspect the trunks. Bettina watched him as he circled round them, then came back, and laid down, facing the fox-skin, his eyes closely regarding the glassy ones in the head before him. He growled an angry challenge and hit the rug with his paw.

"Stop that, Kim!" said his master sharply. The dog obeyed, and rested his head on his paws.

"Well, the moments are flying; will you go?" He rose from his chair and began putting on his gloves. Bettina fingered the ribbons on her gown. It seemed as if she was always refusing his offers of kindness. Looking up she said with some hesitation:

"Oh dear! Why did you ask me? There's no reason why I should not go, but—you see I—" then laughing nervously, "you will always think of me as the woman who refused you. To be honest, I don't care about going."

"Well, just as you say; it would be no enjoy-

ment for me if you would not care to go," and his voice sounded strained and sharp. "If any other woman said such a thing as that to me, I'd whistle to my dog, take my hat and say 'good day,' and that would be the last I'd see of her, you may be very sure. But I'd rather you'd speak just as you feel and not manufacture a lot of excuses. You are pretty blunt at times, but I like it even if it does make me feel sore. I won't urge you to reconsider, it might bring on a fit of indigestion," and he laughed good-naturedly. He turned at the door to say:

"I shall miss you, Miss Germaine, and can you wonder? Do you realize that I have seen you every day except Sunday for eight months? I feel that I owe you much. Those days in the studio brought me out from my dream of idleness. Everyone who comes in contact with you feels your influence for good. Your childlike sincerity disarms suspicion, and your frankness is as refreshing as a drink of water when one has traveled a long and dusty way and comes across a little brook babbling along at the turn of the road. I shall think of you in a way I cannot seem to express in words." She started to speak. He interrupted her with: "Don't be afraid. I have no intention of allowing your prophecy to come true."

"What do you mean?" she asked wonderingly.

"Oh, that I should always remember you as 'the woman who refused me'! I do not mean to

risk anything, you see. The memory of a refusal to lunch will not affect my night's sleep," he said, half smiling. He whistled to Kim, who was sleeping soundly beside the fox-skin rug; the dog sprang up, shook off the drowsiness that was holding him and came running into the hall. Bettina regarded her friend with anxious eyes.

"Dear Mr. Garland, I really didn't mean what you thought I did when I started to speak. But I see it is better I should not say what I have in my mind. I never mean to sermonize, but I was brought up to be frank and I can't seem to help it."

He held himself well in check as he extended his hand.

"I do not mean to run any risks, little friend, your friendship lies too near my heart. If all the women who adopt the stage would be as you have been to the men they meet, the life would be a very different one. I like your ways because I like happy people, and the one who can radiate happiness when the heart is aching commands my admiration and respect. By the way," his hand on the door knob, "I should like very much to go to the station and see you safely started on your journey, may I?"

At a quarter to twelve that same night, a gentleman in evening dress with light top coat, was seen walking up and down the waiting room of the Grand Central Station. In his hand he carried a

large bunch of pale pink roses. From time to time his eyes sought the outer door. Just as the 12.03 Boston Express was announced the door swung open and a young lady in traveling coat of shepherd's plaid and English cap to match came walking rapidly across the room, closely followed by a porter with her luggage. The gentleman in evening dress advanced to meet her, and together they passed along the platform until the car was reached. He held the roses up to her as she tarried in the vestibule. He pressed her hand in both of his, then raising his hat, said in a low voice:

“Good night, and may the summer hold much of joy for thee and thine, my Friend Cecelia.”

“Good-by, dear friend, and may you be happy, too.” Lifting the roses to her face she passed within the car.

CHAPTER VI

A SERIES OF ADVENTURES

AND you say it has been three weeks since you received any message?" inquired Mr. Carter, as he waved a palm-leaf fan Madam had just handed to him. The day was warm and he had been walking rapidly.

"Why, it is over a month since Richard received that last twenty-dollar bill. Not that we are thinking of the money," she quickly added, "but it all seems so strange and unnatural. It puzzles me, and when I look at that precious little lamb and think what the future may hold for her if the mother should come and take her, it almost gives me a nervous chill whenever I hear the knocker sound," and they both looked toward the Grand Master lying on the grass where the ground sloped abruptly to the shore, and a little fairy-like figure hovering about him. Miriam had been gathering clover leaves and little twigs from the shrubbery and was sticking them in her playfellow's hair.

"Richard and I were talking about it this morning while Baby was out with Melissa. You see,

we have not used any of the money she has sent. Richard opened an account in the savings bank for Miriam, which now amounts to nearly seven hundred dollars. I wonder where it came from! Oh, I do feel so tried at times! I want to think well of one who was responsible for sending us such a little treasure, but I cannot help wondering a hundred different things. *Who* do you suppose, and *where* do you suppose this 'B. L.' is, Uncle Poly? Now tell me truly?" her tones were anxiously confidential.

"Well," replied the person addressed, waving aside a bumblebee that was circling around attracted by the rose in his buttonhole, "not being a clairvoyant, I cannot go into a trance and tell you who or what 'B. L.' may be or where she is, much as I would like to do so."

Another wave of the fan. "Nothing could induce me to go into a trance with this bee buzzing round unless you'd promise to shoo him away. But I'm not an en-trancing person, as you know." Madam smiled at his pun and lifted a warning finger. "I can only remind you," he went on to say, "of what Dr. Johnson told me the day I saw him last. The lady he said was Miriam's mother, appeared to be a thoroughly respectable and rather attractive young woman by the name of Lawton, or something like that, but where she is or what she is likely to do, nothing can be proven by me. The postmarks on the letters show that

she must have been in New York; but as for her present whereabouts, she may be here in this very town for all I know."

Madam shuddered, the strain was telling on her, and Uncle Poly's fidgeting about, and his frantic waving of the fan at the bee, had such an unsettling effect that she arose from her chair and paced back and forth under the trees.

"There!" exclaimed Uncle Poly triumphantly. "He's gone to fairer fields, I hope," as the bee darted away and was soon out of sight and hearing. "I should have gone distracted if he hadn't," thought Madam Denman, as she resumed her seat.

Napoleon Bonaparte Carter many years ago had fallen into the habit of dropping in at Ledge-lawn every Sunday afternoon for tea. His acquaintance with Madam dated back to his first days in Norwood, when, with his mother, he attended the reception given at Ledge-lawn when the Judge brought home his beautiful young bride. Those were very gay times in the social history of the little river town. Mr. and Mrs. Hayden, when young married people, had kept open house at Stonyhurst, entertaining a great deal. A most delightful social intercourse was carried on for many years, even after the little ones came to gladden the homes, until Norwood was shocked and saddened by the sudden taking away of Mr. Hayden and his wife by a railroad accident, when Theo was ten years of age. Since that time the

families of Ledgelawn and Stonyhurst had been as one in love and interest, and Uncle Poly like a pendulum vibrated between the two. Before the advent of the little Treasure the Sunday afternoons had been spent in reading and conversation, but Miriam had revolutionized the routine of the whole household.

Now there were romps on the lawn and singing of songs, much laughter, and little if any reading. The child's laugh came to them now, as Miriam made Bonnie leap over his prostrate master.

"Will you see how our fastidious Richard lets that child tumble over him! I never knew anything like it! She completely rules him," and Madam's face grew very soft and fond. "Richard is having quite a vacation since court closed, and there has been but little lodge work this month. Next week he and Micah go to the Aroostook to institute a subordinate lodge. The year has been an active one in lodge making, and the fund for the Home is rapidly increasing. The postal cards are proving a great attraction. I received a nice letter from Sister Ward, who wants very much to attend the lawn fête we are to give. By the way, when do you think we'd better have it?"

"The pavilion and grounds are at the service of the lodge whenever it chooses to make use of them," replied Mr. Carter. "August is always a busy month at the Arms and the visitors like enter-

tainments. Better not delay too far into the month. I'll bring it up to-morrow night," he said with sudden determination. "You will be at lodge, of course?" Madam signified her intention to do so by an inclination of the head. "I think it would be well," continued Uncle Poly, "to have some outside talent, as I understand from the committee that there is a vacancy to be filled on the program. Now, there is a young lady at the Arms who is a fine singer. She came over five weeks ago, Miss Germaine, her name is. She asked permission to practice and does so every morning. Sometimes she has quite an audience on the piazzas and in the garden. Otherwise she is the quietest boarder I ever had. Seldom comes downstairs except to meals and to practice, sits out on the little balcony most of the time. Now, I'm pretty sure she'd sing if I asked her. We are very good friends and she sings most beautifully." And he gazed skyward enraptured by the thought.

"That will be a treat indeed," said Madam enthusiastically, "and the chairman must call on her directly. I will second your motion if you will make one to-morrow night. Sapphire's recitation will be a novelty, but I am sure she will supply lots of amusement, and in any event will give *local color*." Mr. Carter's expression indicated that he recognized and enjoyed Madam's joke.

"I am to have the privilege of hearing Sapphire in private, as I shall remain at home that

evening with Miriam. Of course Richard must attend, and it would be cruel not to allow Melissa to witness the début of her pupil. It will be a great event in the history of Cornelia's jewels."

A birdlike whistle came floating on the breeze. They looked toward the avenue. Micah and Theodora Hayden were approaching. Micah waved his Panama and Theo her handkerchief. They separated at the terrace, Micah seeking the Grand Master and Miriam, who were on the beach with Bonnie; Theo crossed the lawn, her silken gown floating about her in diaphanous folds. She greeted Madam with affection, kissing her French fashion on both cheeks; expressed the opinion that Uncle Poly was growing younger and handsomer every day, and declining the offer of a chair, sank down on the grass beside Madam.

Theo's eyes were sparkling, she was very animated. Such a day as they had had, a regular field day! Micah and she had left home at six that morning and made the tour of the lakes in their new automobile, returning by the shore road.

"Pretty breezy, eh, Theo?" observed Mr. Carter, taking up the field glasses from the table and leveling them on a little schooner, all canvas spread.

"Yes, a fine breeze for sailing. We saw lots of yachts in the bay. We both have taken on a great old color. Micah's nose will do for a light on the car for some time, I tell him. Just see my cheeks!

My nose isn't so bad," and she shut one eye to take a squint at it.

"The increased glow is not unbecoming, Theo dear," said Madam, looking at her critically, "if anything you are usually a trifle pale."

"Speaking of yachts, I must tell you an adventure. It was really quite exciting." She turned, facing them, her chin resting in her hand. "We had just come into Castine and were on our way to the hotel for dinner, when we noticed a perfectly dandy steam yacht coming in to the wharf. She was a big one, painted pale gray with a broad pink band. The name in gilt letters was 'FRIEND CECELIA.' When Micah read it he acted like one possessed. He kept repeating the name over and over again until I said: 'What is the matter with you?' 'Why,' said he; 'that's the name of—the name of—the name of—' 'The name of *what*? For pity's sake get it off your mind!' I demanded, for I couldn't think what he was driving at. 'Why the name of—oh, I have it! The name of the leading character in "The Quakeress and the Sailor"—I couldn't think of that name to save me! I wonder who owns that yacht? Some New Yorker, of course. I'll drive on the wharf and find out,' and if he didn't send the car almost to the edge of the pier where she was being tied up.

"Two gentlemen and a lady came forward as we drew near, and one of the men, a stunning looking chap with white hair and mustache and such

handsome dark eyes and brows, looked up at us as much as to say, 'I like your nerve!' when, it was too funny for words! He caught sight of Micah, their eyes met, and you should have heard the regular war-whoop that brother of mine gave! Perhaps you did hear it and thought it was the Boston boat! He sprang from the car crying: 'Jack Garland, well I'll be—' and this man climbed up on the wharf in a jiffy and he and Micah hugged each other. The couple on the yacht were laughing fit to kill themselves and I wasn't far behind, I guess. When Micah calmed down enough to get his breath, he introduced Mr. John Worthington Garland, of New York. You know he and Micah used to be great friends when brother was on the *Herald*. He is an artist and not an old man at all, only prematurely gray. Then he introduced his sister and her husband, Mr. Tilton. They are cruising. Came from New York three weeks ago. When Micah was in New York last winter he went with Mr. Garland to see that musical thing he's forever whistling."

"Oh, I know, you said the yacht was named for its principal character," said Madam.

"Why, to be sure, 'The Quakeress and the Sailor,'" said Theo. "Well, to 'resume and continue on,' as Samantha Allen says.

"Nothing would do but we must have dinner with them. So we all piled into the car and took it 'round to the garage and then promenaded over

to the hotel and had such a dinner! They are very delightful people. I asked them to come here on Tuesday on their way up the river, have tea, and stay over night. I wanted them to make us a longer visit, but Mr. Garland has to be back in New York on some business connected with this musical piece which is to be brought out in Boston in September. He wants to take me to see it when I am there this winter." Theo cast down her eyes, the color deepening in her cheeks, and began to pick blades of grass from the lawn beside her.

"That will be a pleasure for you to look forward to, will it not?" remarked Madam, noticing the change. "And they are to be here this Tuesday?"

"Yes, and I want you, and you," nodding to Uncle Poly, "and Dick, and Babykins to all come over for tea on the lawn, and come early as you can so they will have time to get acquainted with you."

Madam was gravely silent for a few moments. Theo's words had started a train of thought that was somewhat disquieting. In fact she felt very nervous and shaky lately; she was perfectly well, it was evidently all a mental condition. She strove to keep out of her voice any tinge of this inward agitation as she said:

"I will come with pleasure, Theo; I cannot an-

swer for Richard, but when it comes to Miriam, I think she had better remain at home."

Theo looked from one to the other in surprise.

"Leave Miriam at home? Oh, Madam, dearest, I want her. She is our star entertainer. You plead for me, Uncle Poly," and she looked at him beseechingly.

Madam looked down on her young friend with deeply pondering eyes. She was turning over in her mind what Theo had told her about these friends and the probabilities of meeting them in the future. Theo's enthusiasm and her evident admiration for Mr. Garland would foreshadow the possibility of something more than merely a summer acquaintance. One can never tell what the future may hold, and she must be careful in all her decisions.

"Theo, dear, I feel the conviction that you will see these friends often in the future, and naturally we, Richard, Miriam and I will be brought in contact with them more or less. Now I want to begin rightly. Almost everyone here knows Miriam's story, and Cornelia, so Uncle Poly tells me, has christened the child 'The Grand Master's Treasure.' All can see how completely he is bound up in her." Then with quiet determination "I think you had better acquaint your friends with the history of our little girl before I come over, and if it would disappoint you if she were left at home, she certainly shall come, but only on

those conditions. You see, it might save us possible embarrassment; we cannot tell how much or how little they may know already about her." As she finished speaking she looked inquiringly at Mr. Carter in evident desire for him to approve her views. He quickly interpreted the glance and said:

"I think you are quite right, Madam, exactly so. If our baby were a less remarkable child it might not matter so much, but I should not let the mystery that seems to be hanging about her cause you needless anxiety. Now, Dick——"

"Oh, Dick," interrupted Theo, "catch him worrying! He and Micah are as fussy as old hens with one chicken, the way they carry on about the baby. Dick said only last night when he was over to the house, speaking of Miriam, he didn't care a rap who B. L. was, possession was nine points of the law, and he should put up a pretty stiff fight before he gave the child up to anyone."

They all smiled at this remark, it was so characteristic of the Grand Master.

"As I was about to say," continued Mr. Carter, "Richard feels perfectly sure that everything will turn out for the best. He tells me he has never lost a moment's sleep over it. There is nothing to be kept secret; the child was left in his care, and the mother said she should some time come and claim her. Well, as Dick says, 'Let her come,

we've got the baby, there's nothing we need fear'; and he's exactly right about that, as he is about everything else," and he settled back with the air of conviction that he had delivered a verdict satisfactory to every one.

CHAPTER VII

THE IDENTITY OF BETTYMUZ

MICAH and Richard with Miriam between them emerged from the house, followed by Bonnie, who was feeling the added importance of a big pink bow Melissa had tied on his collar to match the child's frock. With a hand for each, Miriam skipped along between the two men like a little rose, wind blown. She was talking very fast and earnestly, and her companions were laughing at her remarks; in fact, laughter had reigned supreme since her coming to Ledge-lawn. Theo called to the child and held out her arms, the little round pink legs fairly flew over the grass as their owner came to her in joyous welcome.

"A big bear hug for Theo," cried the little one, throwing both arms around her neck, and making what to her mind was a terrifying growl. "Are you 'fraid?" she asked.

"Terribly," said Theo, "just you growl at Uncle Poly." The child made a dive at him, but Mr. Carter remarked that she could not fool him so easily and caught her in his arms, giving such

a splendid imitation of an old bear's growl that Miriam's eyes grew very large and Uncle Poly rose greatly in her estimation.

"You have forgotten Sweetheart," said Theo. Miriam slid down from Mr. Carter's knee and darted like a little bird to its home nest, straight into Madam's arms. The men had thrown themselves on the grass and after Miriam had distributed her embraces to every one, including Bonnie, she seated herself on Theo's lap where she 'could watch Sweetheart,' she said.

"Tell Sweetheart what you told Micah and me, Baby," said Richard.

"'Bout S'fire?" asked the child.

"Yes, what you are going to play."

"Oh, yes," said the little girl, clapping her hands. "S'fire and I are going to play Awk, and I'm to be Noah and S'fire will be Ham, 'cause she's so vewy dark. But she doesn't like it; she said she could powder and be white if she wanted to, but she didn't want to."

"Too common, eh, Baby?" said Theo.

Miriam shrugged her plump shoulders and regarded her friend curiously.

"Why do you look at me like that, Baby Bunting?" asked Theo, bending her face to a level with the child's.

Miriam looked up at Madam with a peculiar smile on her face, as much as to say, "You know," but vouchsafed no reply.

"Answer Theo, Miriam, when she speaks to you," said Madam, laying a gentle hand on the curly head.

Miriam stroked Theo's cheeks with her chubby fingers and whispered:

"Has you been putting on ooge, Theo?" The whisper carried so well that a broad smile spread over all faces save Theo's.

"Have I what?" looking from the child's mischievous face to those smiling around her. Miriam elevated her delicately penciled brows in a very old-fashioned way and with another little shrug said in a low voice:

"Your cheeks are werry wed, Theo, has you been putting on ooge? Ooge out of a little teeny weeny wound box?" she insisted, a roguish light in her blue eyes.

A feeling of utter amazement swept over the girl. Whoever would have dreamed such a thing!

"I do believe you mean *rouge*! Why you little image, what in the world do you know about rouge?" and she looked her full in the eyes.

Madam pressed her handkerchief to her lips; Uncle Poly, with his mouth stretched from ear to ear, covered it discreetly with a palm-leaf fan; while Micah and Richard, shaking with laughter, hid their faces in their arms as they lay on the grass. "What will come next?" observed Micah to Dick. Miriam unaware of the sensation she was creating maintained her quiet self-posses-

sion. Spreading out her little skirts she settled herself more comfortably.

“Bettymuz has ooge in a teeny weeny box. She keeps it in a tin box in her twunk. When she comes she’ll show it to you, Theo. Oh!” and the little tones vibrated with joy. “Bettymuz will soon be here, she always comes with the woses. The woses are here, aren’t they, Uncle Poly?” and running to him she began smelling the flower on his coat.

The group exchanged significant glances. Every pleasant night since the warmer weather had set in Miriam with the collie by her side had waited at the avenue gate for the Grand Master on his return with the evening mail. If by chance he had been detained past her bedtime her first words of greeting in the morning were, “Did Bettymuz come, Witchard? Where’s Bettymuz?”

They all remembered how, on the morning following her arrival, she had asked where Bettymuz was, cried passionately, refusing to be comforted, until Richard had taken her by her trembling little hand and gone all over the house in a fruitless search for this same Bettymuz. When he asked who she meant, the child either ignored the question, or said, “Why, Bettymuz is Bettymuz.” And so it had passed into a sort of joke among them, “Who is Bettymuz?”

Melissa had lighted the lamp under the kettle, the signal that tea was ready, and they all seated

themselves around the table under the spreading maple tree nearer the beach. It was late in the afternoon and the sun was sinking behind the hills on the other side of the river. The wind had gone down with the sun; the air was sweet with the odor of clover. Lorenzo, accompanied by the infant phenomena, was driving Daisy Buttercup, the prize Jersey cow, home from pasture. As they passed the turn of the road to the barnyard, Sapphire waved her hand to Miriam. The little girl stretched up to her fullest height to give her hand greater prominence, and waved back. She was very fond of Sapphire, and was continually running over to the cottage to see her and to help tend the baby. Madam took this opportunity to remark to her son:

"You noticed what she said to Theo, Richard?" He bowed, his eyes watching the child's every movement, as she waved to Sapphire. Madam sighed.

"I must confess I do not like the sound. It is too suggestive of a personality I should dread to have come near her," she observed apprehensively.

"Don't borrow trouble, Duchess," he said reassuringly. "You know one can never account in the usual way for anything Baby says or does." His tone was low, intended only for her ears. "Baby is unique," and he looked lovingly across

at the little figure now settling herself again to the enjoyment of her bread and milk.

"Dickie, stop dreaming and pass me the sugar," said Theo. "You're getting more absent-minded than Micah, and he passed the limit ages ago."

"Why, I'm not absent-minded," contradicted her brother. "I'm in love, I openly declare it. It's either love or your liver, Dick. Sure sign," and he winked openly at his friend.

"Oh, you have 'a nose for news,' as the saying goes, and it's pretty well developed," laughed Richard. "But you needn't try to get any scare lines out of me. Just tackle Uncle Poly, he ought to have some news for you."

"Right you are, Richard, I must certainly visit the Arms and see whom I can interview. Now," and his eyes gleamed with fun as he looked toward Miriam, who was watching him intently, she and Micah being great chums. "Now, I say, if I could only find out who this old chestnut of a Bettymuz is it might be worth going after. What do you think, Miriam?"

At the mention of the name "Bettymuz," a startled expression spread over the child's face. She looked at each in turn, then rested her eyes on Micah while she neatly folded her napkin and bib. Leaning forward she said in a shaky voice:

"Bettymuz is not old, Micah Hay, and she's not a ches'nut to woast and eat. Bettymuz is dear,

Bettymuz is pwetty, I love my musser Betty. Oh—" and the little tones were filled with tears—"I'm going to find my Bettymuz!"

With one of those lightning movements natural to her, she slipped from her chair, and before anyone realized what she was going to do, was flying over the lawn.

Bonnie, roused from his nap by the sound of his playmate's voice, which rose higher and higher toward the end, went after her in hot pursuit. Micah, instantly sobered and with a wealth of love in his eyes, started from his chair. Madam Denman laid a restraining hand on his arm.

"Sit still, please, Micah. Theo, don't go after her, she'll not run far. She is very sleepy, and these outbursts are like April showers, soon over." Micah drummed on the table, while Theo looked at Dick, her forehead all wrinkled up in perplexity.

"I can see my stock going down, down, down," said Micah in an aggrieved tone. "I'll have to take Polly's lesson to heart and not talk so much. And yet," he said, as he and the Grand Master walked home with Uncle Poly after the storm had cleared and Baby was tucked away for the night, "we know now who Bettymuz is. Betty is what the 'B' stands for, and as we know the 'L' is for Lawton, it is safe to say that Betty Lawton is Miriam's mother."

The tiny figure, like a rosy cloudlet, was nearing the beach when Richard rose quietly and moved away from the table.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I'm going after her," and his tone brooked no interference. It was not long before they saw him catch the child up in his arms, the dog yelping and leaping beside them. With a tired sigh of relief she snuggled closely to him. He thought as he looked at the flushed cheeks, the golden curls clustering about the damp forehead, the dark eyes heavy with sleep, that there never was such a precious charge as this little one that Fate had given him. His heart sank as the thought of possible separation came to him. No, it must not be. Love, not Fate, had sent her to him, and Love never separates, its mission is to unite. Only good could come to her. Time would solve all these mysteries and doubts and for the present she would dwell secure in his heart and know only peace and happiness.

CHAPTER VIII

BETTINA IS INTERVIEWED BY CORNELIA

BETTINA LAWTON, or Miss B. Germaine, according to the register of the Norwood Arms, sat on the balcony outside her window watching through a field glass the movements of a steam yacht which appeared to be heading for the old wharf in the rear of the post office. Mine Host who had just brought her a bunch of freshly gathered roses had seen the yacht as it rounded the point and apprised her of its approach. "It is the largest steam yacht," he said, "that has been seen on the river this season."

"The craft is painted gray and has a broad band of pink around the hull," observed Bettina. "I can't make out her name, see if you can, Mr. Carter," and she passed him the glasses.

Napoleon B. C. seated himself on the balcony railing and looked long and earnestly at the yacht.

"She is flying a pennant of white with dark lettering, and, ah! I recognize a club pennant also. No, I cannot make the words out. I guess I'll take a run down to the wharf and see what her name is

and where she is from. Won't you accompany me?" bowing with old-time courtesy.

Bettina thanked him but declined; it was asking too much of her to leave this delightful balcony. He could tell her all about it on his return.

She took up the glasses as he left and turned them in the direction of Ledge-lawn. Truly Philip chose wisely, this little balcony commanded a view of the entire village. She could see very plainly a portion of the Denman grounds, and naturally it was the first spot her eyes sought in the morning and the last at night in the hope of seeing her little girl. Just now Miriam ran across the lawn closely followed by the golden collie. How she longed to fly to her and gather her baby to her heart!

It was more than five weeks since her arrival in Norwood. She had come directly through from Boston on the day Pullman, arriving at her destination in the early evening. In response to her query as to where she could find a pleasant boarding place, the conductor had put her in charge of a tall, round-shouldered, red-haired youth who appeared on the station platform just as the train pulled in.

"Hiram, here, will take you to the best hotel, barring none, this side of Portland. The Norwood Arms is all right, isn't it, Hiram?"

The warm-haired youth winked his eye and ejaculated as he shoved both hands deep down in

his trousers' pockets, "Sure!" that word fraught with such a wealth of meaning for good or evil. Taking her suit case he led the way to the 'bus around the side of the station.

"I'll take your check, ma'am," he said, after she had seated herself. As she handed it to him, he began to take mental stock of his passenger from her stylish little cloth cap to the plaid spats matching her coat and cap. "She's going some on style; I'd a known she was from New York. Got the stamp right on her." As he turned, the horses moved slightly. Bettina, keyed up to concert pitch, felt her heart leap with fear.

"Hiram!" she cried.

He turned quickly. "Ma'am?" he said.

"Will these horses stand? That off one is pricking up his ears."

Hiram grinned indulgently as he pushed his hat back, displaying the auburn forelock.

"You don't need to fret a mite, ma'am. Them hosses is steady, there ain't no outs about them; but you see, they know as how you's a stranger. That off one is mighty knowin'. He likes to put on style, thinks he's a tally-ho leader full of ginger! Shucks! Don't you get flustered, they're all right!"

He patted their velvet noses, whispering softly to them; then, whistling, shuffled along to the truck where Bettina's trunk stood, the only piece of first-class baggage left by the express.

"City folks, all right," remarked the agent, nodding in the direction of the 'bus.

"Sure. Bet your life!" drawled Hiram with an air of superiority. "She's first cousin to J. P. Morgan," lying cheerfully.

The agent gave him a shove.

"Git out," he exclaimed. "You can't make me swaller no such truck as that." Hiram shouldered the trunk with as much ease as if it had been a sack of oats, and started down the platform.

"Swaller it or not for all I care," he called back. "If you knows the Bar Harbor millionaires and their wimmen folks better than I does, then I'm a liar, all right." And he certainly was!

Bettina drew her veil over her face as they turned into the main street. The hotel conveyance carried the mail, and was, in consequence, the most observed of all vehicles at this hour. Every passer-by was headed the same way, the tide of humanity setting in toward the post office. She carefully scrutinized the faces of all the tall men as she looked from one side to the other and wondered if she could recognize the Grand Master if he happened to be among them.

The air was deliciously cool and grateful to Bettina after the warm day on the train. On her coat drooped three of the beautiful roses Mr. Garland had given her. The others had succumbed to the heat. She was very weary and her head was aching. She would be so glad when they

reached the hotel. The horses trotted briskly along, slowing up of their own accord in front of the post office, around which a crowd of the townspeople were gathered. Hiram swung the mail bag into the postmaster's arms. The latter was a tall, thin man with keen gray eyes, who peered into the omnibus at Bettina, wondering who she was.

"First installment of the city visitors," he said to himself. "Well, I shan't have long to wait, at most twenty-four hours, then she'll line up with the rest of them and say: 'Anything for me, please?'" He knew their ways; the post-office window was the open sesame to all newcomers.

Directly across from the post office was situated the hotel. There were two huge granite posts surmounted by a framework of wrought iron on either side of the drive, and a large lantern hung in the center with "NORWOOD ARMS" painted in black on its glass sides. The horses, homeward bound, tossed their heads and trotted up to the hotel steps in fine style. Hiram jumped from his seat and assisted her to alight. Taking her luggage he preceded her up the steps where, standing on the broad veranda, was a slender little man with delicate features, very black eyes, gray hair, mustache and imperial, and—could she believe her eyes?—attired in evening dress.

Napoleon Bonaparte Carter, as Mine Host of the Norwood Arms, came forward to greet his

guest, welcomed her to Norwood according to the custom, which had been that of his predecessors with all new arrivals, and personally escorted her to the office. Waving a hand to Philip Grayson, the clerk, he drew his heels together, bowed, and left the hotel to go the way of all the town to the post office.

Bettina recalled her feeling of fright when the pen was handed her to sign the register. It was barely possible that as Mrs. Lawton she might be recalled by some one coming to the inn from Newbury. It was necessary to use caution; it was a desperate game she was playing and the stakes were high; she must be careful to guard her hand and, until she was convinced that the course she intended to pursue was the best for her child, she should preserve her incognito. With an unsteady hand she wrote the name of "Miss B. Germaine," and the address "New York City."

When the clerk asked her if she had any preference as to the location of her room, she felt unaccountably shy, owing perhaps to the kindly manner in which Philip addressed her. With a smile she said she would leave the choice to him, but would like a pleasant view.

Philip selected a key from the rack, and taking her suit case signaled to Hiram to follow with the trunk. Reaching the end of the corridor on the third floor, he stopped, unlocked a door, and entering turned on the electric light. The room dis-

closed was large and square with a window in front and a French window on the side. He threw open the doors of the latter and stepping out on to the balcony called her attention to the sightliness of the view, the lights gleaming far down the river and on the opposite shore.

"To my mind, it is the best room in the house," he remarked, as he moved toward the door. He would send up some ice water directly, and the maid would show her where the bath was on that floor, should she care to refresh herself. His trained eye, ever alert to the wants of others, had detected the weariness in her voice and manner, and in some inexplicable way he felt drawn to her from the first. It seemed to him, as he told Mr. Carter afterwards, when they looked at the register, as if he must have met her somewhere before.

In about a quarter of an hour there was a very light tap on the door, and in response to Bettina's inquiry, "Who is it?" a mellow voice replied:

"It's only Cornelia, honey, with yo's ice water," and a comely colored woman entered in all the glory of her best-Sunday-go-to-meeting canary-colored lawn with red spots, "rubies in a sea ob gold," as she poetically described it.

It was Cornelia's unfailing custom to visit new arrivals and pass judgment on their fitness to remain as guests before twenty-four hours had passed over their heads. If they met with her

approval, the visitor's stay at the Arms was all that anyone could desire, but if they failed to do so, their room was usually asked for and the place knew them no more. Cornelia, like many of her race, had keen intuition and knowledge of human nature, and these coupled with an ingratiating manner, made her of inestimable value to the easy-going proprietor of the Norwood Arms. Crossing the room, she deposited the tray with its pitcher and glass on a small table by the window.

"Thank you; Cornelia, is it?" said Bettina, as the woman paused beside her trunk to inspect the labels.

"Yes, honey, dat's my name, Mrs. Cornelia Washington. And what may yo's be, please?" and she lifted a pair of large, widely opened eyes to hers.

"Miss Germaine."

"Oh, yaas, Miss German," repeated Cornelia somewhat airily. The labels had impressed her with the importance of the guest, who must have been a great traveler to have acquired so many. "Mos' tired tuh death, ain't yo's, dear? Come far?" Glancing again at the labels, with a sympathetic sigh she settled her plump form on the trunk and folded her arms.

"New York," said Bettina, as she removed the pins from her hair and let it fall loosely over her shoulders.

Cornelia's eyes rolled. "New York? I wan' tuh

know!" Her tone was awesome. Anyone coming from the great metropolis was immediately associated in her mind with multimillionaires and the very latest of styles. She immediately took in every detail connected with the personal appearance of the young woman before her. The suitcase opened on the chair disclosed certain feminine belongings which indicated cultivated taste, and the very up-to-date coat and hat hanging in the open closet convinced her that the new guest was fully up to the required standard. She liked, too, the way her hair was done up, and regretted that she did not notice more particularly if she took any rats out. She patted her pompadour, or "pomp," as she called it, and wondered if this new way of doing the hair would be becoming to her. Usually Cornelia wore the gaudiest bannanas, Southern style, but the "pomp" was substituted for occasions like this when she desired to impress the newcomer with the fact that, if it was 'way down East, people there still obeyed fashion's decrees. Satisfied, she arose and approached the bed, removed the shams, drew down the covers and gave the pillows an energetic puffing up.

"Now, honey, yo's'll find dis a mos' comferble bed. Real hair mat'ras and live geeses fedders in dem pillers. Mr. Carter only has de bes'. Brekfus is served at seben o'clock on de dot and kep' all het up till eight. Den de doors am closed."

Having laid down the law governing the morning meal, she made a little courtesy and laid her hand on the door knob.

"Here, Cornelia," said Bettina, handing her a crisp bank note she had just taken from her purse, "I am very glad you are here. I am accustomed to Southern help, and it will be homelike to see you about. Are the others all of your color?"

Cornelia's face was wreathed with smiles, her eyes twinkled between the ridges of fat and her teeth gleamed like rows of polished ivory. She liked the tone that accompanied the gift, but when she recognized the denomination of the bill, "For de Lawd's sake, George, I lik' tuh fell posterate when I ketch' sight ob dat 2!" she confided to her spouse when together they went on their rounds that night. Her joy was unbounded. Here was a boarder worth having!

"Thank yo's, Miss German, I's much 'bliged and I hopes yo'll fin' it 'greeable hyah. I'se de cook an' sort ob housekeeper roll' in one, an' meh man, George, he does all de buttlin' an' hep's me out in de kitchen. Ruby an' Pearl, dems meh jewels, waits on de table an' tends tuh de rooms. We's all one fambly, dear." Then, fingering the bill as she slipped it in her bosom, she said in unctuous tones: "I knew yo's quality firs' time I set eyes on yo'. Good night." No sooner had she closed the door than it was reopened for her to whisper:

“Rember what yo’ dreams, honey: firs’ night in a strang’ bed in a new town, boun’ to cum tuh pass. When Pearl cums tuh clar up yo’ room tell her what yo’ dream was an’ she’ll interrupt it for yo’. She was born wid a veil, an’ has dubble sight. Sech chillun knows by insting all de signs ob de zodium.”

CHAPTER IX

THE GIRL ON THE BALCONY

FLYING the colors of the New York Yacht Club, the *Friend Cecelia* came in alongside of the old Bank wharf. Having secured permission to tie up there from the postmaster, who with his assistant had been watching the approach of yacht from the back windows, Mr. Garland and his guests came ashore. They were observed of a dozen or more of the townspeople, including Uncle Poly. They had almost tumbled over one another in their haste to get to the wharf as they ran down the narrow passageway between the Bank building and the grocery store.

Mrs. Tilton raised her crimson parasol, remarking that "One misses the breeze as soon as one comes ashore. It is really a warm day." The gentlemen fell into line on either side as they reached the front of the building.

"Wait a second," said Jack, taking out his watch, "it's too early to go up now. We made great time, didn't we, Billy?" this to his brother-in-law.

"Rattling!" exclaimed that jolly-faced rotund

gentleman, tightening his leather belt, and giving his duck trousers a shake. "The yacht is a corker and Captain Judkins certainly knows how to get the speed out of her. Going to the hotel, aren't you, for dinner?"

"Yes," said Jack, looking at the Arms as it rose in all its picturesqueness on the opposite side of the road. "Micah says it is worth patronizing. Table extra fine, and the house one of the sights of the town."

They crossed the street and entered the grounds. The avenue was very cool under the shade of the spreading trees. Mrs. Tilton was enthusiastic in her praise.

"Really this is a charming spot, and if Miss Hayden is a sample of the class of people, I don't wonder you wanted to come here. I just fell in love with her; didn't you, Jack?" And she glanced significantly at her husband.

Garland felt the color mount and it annoyed him. Great Scott! When had such a thing happened before? Not since his salad days, when in his Sophomore year at Yale he fell in love with the college widow!

"Oh, I don't know," he said evasively, removing his cap to wipe his forehead. The day was very warm, he thought.

Mrs. Tilton noticed the heightened color, and the indication pleased her. She sidled up to him and said in a low tone:

“It’s all in the way you say it, Brother. ‘*Oh, I don’t know,*’ mimicking him, then laughing. “Now I think Miss Hayden is well worth your waking up to look at. Billy and I think she is a prize, don’t we, Billikins? If you can succeed in winning such a girl as that, I promise you my blessing, and that old silver tankard shall be thrown in along with it. So see what you’ve got to stimulate your endeavors!”

“Don’t talk nonsense, Bessie,” was his only comment. Nevertheless, he felt decidedly pleased that Miss Hayden had found favor in his sister’s eyes. Her approbation would weigh heavily with his mother and Janet; it would practically mean the capitulation of the whole family. But what a wild dream to indulge in! She might be already betrothed; he tried vainly to recall whether she wore an engagement ring or not. It was his impression that she wore no jewelry of any kind. The absence of a ring was a crumb of consolation. Well, if it was to be, he would be a pretty lucky man. Then he suddenly remembered that Micah had spoken of his friend Denman who lived next door, and the thought tantalized him, for Miss Hayden had said something or other in his praise; perhaps he was the chosen one. His spirits fell. He was hard hit, and for the first time in his life felt apprehensive and almost overwhelmed by the knowledge that he was “all in,” as he expressed it to himself. Yes, he certainly was in

love, no mistake about it. Unconsciously he quickened his pace.

"Whoa, there!" called Mr. Tilton as he came puffing up alongside. "This is no walking match. Take it easy. Like the merry, merry chorus, 'Let us wander light and free,' " he warbled in a high tenor. Jack slackened his pace, remarking that he always walked faster when thinking hard, whereupon Mrs. Tilton gave her husband a poke with her umbrella and then apologized for so doing. They had just reached the turn in the road where the avenue divides and curves around the house on either side. The wonderful view spread out before them was like a grand panorama. They paused to enjoy the beauty of the landscape.

"There's where we turned to come in, Billy," cried Jack, indicating with his finger the bend in the river. "There's the Boston boat now! See her, Bess? She's just rounding the point of that little peninsula. Jove! This is a sightly spot." The structure beside them loomed up like some old castle.

"Jack, Billy, come here!" called Mrs. Tilton, then as they drew near, she lowered her voice to a whisper. "Look up and see that dear little Romeo and Juliet balcony and the girl on it. She isn't looking. See?"

Sure enough, on the next to the top story was a balcony almost hidden by the heavy growth of

ivy, and on it sat a girlish figure in pink, her head bending low over some work.

"Now, isn't that a picture, Jack?" she exclaimed. Both men expressed their admiration, and having done so, Mr. Tilton joined his wife as she wandered over the grounds, but Jack remained motionless, still gazing at the balcony and its occupant. There was something startlingly familiar about the poise of the head, and the curve of the cheek, the hair so dark and glossy. Could it be——

The intensity of his gaze must have been felt by the occupant of the balcony, for she turned her head and looked over the railing straight into his eyes.

Bettina instantly recognized Mr. Garland as he did her, but as quickly did she withdraw her glance and passed within. She was trembling so that she could hardly step. It was a great shock to see Jack Garland looking up at her, when, had she thought of him at all, it would have been as many miles away. What should she do! Discretion whispered, "Wait!" That yacht was the *Friend Cecelia*, and Jack Garland and his sister whom she had met at the studio, were perhaps under the same roof with her.

"So this had been Miss Germaine's destination," thought Jack, as he turned away. Why did she refuse to speak to him? For recognize him she unquestionably did. He looked to see if his

companions had been spectators of this bit of by-play. Fortunately not; Mr. and Mrs. Tilton were on the veranda paying court to an enormous cat, as white as the driven snow.

He strolled back, and again looked up at the balcony, but the girl was no longer there. Perhaps he had made a mistake, there is always that chance at such a distance. But no, he had not studied that hair and those features to be easily mistaken. He ran up the side steps and joined the couple still worshiping at the shrine of the white cat.

"Did you ever see such a beastie, Jack?" cried his sister, smoothing the animal's head. "Isn't he a model? Oh, you booful kittie! How I should love to spend a summer here! I'm so glad you came this way, Jack."

They passed within the swinging doors, pussy trailing after them. The parlor was on the left, directly across from the office. It was a very long, large room, its walls covered with landscape paper representing views on the Seine.

"This paper must be more than a hundred years old, don't you think, Jack?" said Mrs. Tilton, examining it closely through her lorgnette.

"Hardly, for if my memory serves me rightly, Micah said this place was not so old as that. Handsome, isn't it? And well preserved."

The furnishings were as rich and luxurious as those in old-time private mansions. The only modern touch was a grand piano occupying the

far end by the windows which opened on the veranda overlooking the garden. The sofas and chairs were of carved mahogany upholstered in heavy brocade, and the draperies of the windows were of the same rich material. A life-size portrait by Sully of the first Jonathan Norwood occupied the entire space above the mantelpiece of Italian marble. It portrayed a tall dark man with overhanging brows, and rather distinguished face, attired in a tight coat with brass buttons, and an immaculate ruffled shirt; the trousers were very snug fitting and strapped beneath the arches of his pointed shoes. The fireplace was filled with birch logs ready for lighting.

Leaving his guests to feast their eyes and rest themselves on the quaint old furniture, Jack crossed the hall and entered the office. The register would probably be the means of setting at rest his doubts regarding the identity of the lady he had just seen. No one was in the office, and the only sound of life about the place was the rattle of dishes in active preparation for the noon-day meal. He pulled the book eagerly toward him. Turning back a page his eye fell upon the well known signature of the star in "The Quakeress and the Sailor."

So she must have come directly through, just as she said she intended doing, for she left New York on the evening of June 18th and this was written on the 19th. She must have had some

good reason for not recognizing him, for their relations were perfectly harmonious up to the time of their parting at the station, and he had not heard from her since. Perhaps she had not been sure it was he. Should he send up his card? Suddenly it occurred to him that he was very analytical and calm through it all, and the discovery rather surprised and abashed him that his pulses had not quickened at the sight of her as they had previous to his coming to Maine. He well knew the reason was because the thought of Theo Hayden had filled his mind ever since their unexpected meeting on Sunday. "Not that I love Bettina less, but Theo more," he paraphrased, and his heart went out in gratitude to the little actress who had so tactfully and kindly kept him from committing himself that last morning they were together. "She knew I was carried away merely by her art and beauty," he said to himself. "Bettina Germaine is a good girl, guileless as a child, and wise as a woman. It is all right about to-day. She has some very good reason and I shall know what it all means some time." He had just pushed back the book when Mr. Carter entered the office. He had seen the party enter the avenue and made a detour, reaching the Arms by the side road.

"Ah," thought Jack, "this is the unique old party Micah told me to watch for. A type in perfect keeping with the place." He smiled and lifted

his cap as Mr. Carter bade him a cordial good day.

And so they were to take dinner with him? "Highly honored," remarked mine host, looking at the register.

"Yes, my sister, her husband, and I are to pay a flying visit to our old friends the Haydens, whom, of course, you know very well?" said Mr. Garland.

Mr. Carter rubbed his hands together and smiled.

"Yes, indeed. I have known them ever since they were babies. Splendid young people, talented, and both uncommonly fine characters," said Uncle Poly, always happy to voice their praises.

"Do they live far from here?" inquired Jack, as they walked toward the parlor.

"About fifteen minutes' walk. It will give me pleasure to send you over, if you will allow me," said Mr. Carter, as Garland presented Mr. and Mrs. Tilton.

"That will be perfectly delightful, Mr. Carter," said Mrs. Tilton. "I am sure if your horses are like this cat they must be prizes." She was in her element and plied Mr. Carter with numberless questions as to the history of the house and its furnishings.

"But this cat!" she exclaimed, "I never have seen quite such a beauty even in the pet animal shows in New York. She has such a funny, wise

little face! What is her name, Mr. Carter? Angora, is she not?"

"Her name is Sappho, and she is not Angora, but one of our coon cats, a breed native to this State."

"A *coon* cat, and *white*! How funny!" laughed Bessie. "I don't suppose anything could tempt you to part with Sappho?" Whereupon Mr. Tilton put up his hands protestingly.

"I cannot part with Sappho, but possibly I could get you one some time if you didn't mind having another color: white coon cats are rare."

Mrs. Tilton was much pleased. "All coons, likewise cats, look alike to me if they are pretty," she declared. "Billy, I saw your hands go up, in the mirror opposite, so you may just give Mr. Carter our address, for what is home without a coon cat? A howling wilderness!"

"That's what they generally are with cats, I've heard," laughed Mr. Tilton, handing Mr. Carter his card.

An idea occurred to Jack.

"Have you many children here at present?" he asked. Now he would be able to learn if Bettina had her little girl with her.

"Not at present," replied Mr. Carter. "We expect a family from Boston next week who always come for August and September, but the children are not so very little. You see, we have never advertised this inn. It has been the home

of my mother's family for many years, in fact, ever since it was built by the original of the portrait over the mantel. It has ever been a home in the literal sense of the word, a resting place for man and beast. We have some very delightful guests who come to us year after year. Just now we have a very lovely young lady from New York, staying for the summer; she——"

At this moment, George Washington, in white jacket appeared at the door, and announced that dinner was served. Jack could have throttled him with a good will, for undoubtedly Mr. Carter would have mentioned Miss Germaine's name and—but what would have been the use?

Mine Host waved George aside and personally conducted Mr. Garland and his guests to the pleasantest table, the one by the window overlooking the garden. He called their attention to the rows of dahlias opposite, which he said were rare specimens. Jack kept an eager watch on the door as the guests came in for dinner, but no Miss Germaine was among them.

"If I hadn't seen her name in the register, I should begin to feel a bit concerned about myself. I must confess that I am curious; the story she told Williams was perfectly straight and probable. Perhaps Micah knows something about her. I'll ask him. These newspaper men generally know all that is going on in town—it's their business."

That the dinner was perfectly delicious all agreed, and before it was finished Jack had promised that the whole family should come down on the yacht for a month's stay the next summer. Pearl's lips parted in a smile that showed every one of her even little white teeth when Jack slipped a generous tip in her hand as they arose from the table.

"You tell the one who cooked this dinner that she's a star," he said to George as they passed out of the room.

"T'ank yo', Suh, she's de star ob meh ferna-ment—she's meh wif'," was the proud reply.

They sat on the veranda for an hour or more, the men smoking and talking with Mr. Carter, then under his guidance they explored the grounds about the hotel and went through the greenhouse where the choicest plants were grown.

"This pavilion is where we have social gatherings and concerts during the summer months. The floor is very good for dancing, and when we have any entertainment requiring music, the piano is moved here for that purpose. We are to have a concert next week. We have some fine talent."

"Indeed," said Mr. Garland, and then wondered why under the sun he had made such an asinine remark. Why shouldn't they have talent? Perhaps Mr. Carter had intended to say that Bettina would sing. Just then Hiram came to announce

that the carriage was waiting, and the opportunity to lead back to the subject passed. As they walked around the side of the house Jack stole a furtive glance up at the balcony, but no lady was there, only the birds twittering among the vines.

CHAPTER X

“YOU AND I TOGETHER, LOVE”

“You and I together, Love,
Never mind the weather, Love!
You and I together, Love,
All the way, all the way!”

sang Theo as she went on the round of her morning duties, feeling very light-hearted, even frivolous, as she trilled forth the refrain of an old song. Her thoughts constantly reverted to the incidents of Sunday, and womanlike, she fell to wondering what dress she should wear that afternoon. If the day turned out cool, she could wear her crimson mull, Dick always liked to see her in that gown. But it was not for him that she was adorning herself to-day, and she felt a little guilty, for she knew Dick always noticed, and how could she know that Mr. Garland would? She thought of how his every look seemed for her when they were together on Sunday, and how eagerly he accepted Micah's invitation to visit them. She would wear her green silk muslin which was always becoming, and she wanted to look her best.

The morning wore on; the flowers were arranged with more than ordinary care and attention to their artistic effect in the different rooms.

"I shall put roses in Mr. Garland's room," she remarked to Micah. "You said the girl in the play the yacht was named for gathered pink roses, didn't you, Brother?"

Micah thought that unless he was mistaken in signs, Garland would infinitely prefer looking at the roses in Theo's cheeks, but he only said, as he gathered up the scattered sheets of manuscript from the library table, "It would be a delicate attention, especially as he is fond of roses," and begun to hum "The Song of the Rose."

How dearly he loved his sister! She was the only woman in the world who could hold him through the affections. His dream of love had passed, and the memory of it was as a benediction which blessed his every hour.

During his college life he met a Miss Doris Franklin, a New York girl, who visited Brunswick one commencement. They were mutually attracted to each other, and the friendship ripened into love. It was to be near her that he accepted a position on the New York *Herald*, and at her home he met Jack Garland.

When Theo was graduated from Wellesley the home was once more thrown open, and preparations were begun for the coming in the spring of a new mistress to Stonyhurst. Never very robust, Miss Franklin succumbed to the after effects of an attack of La Grippe which she had in the

winter, and with her hand in Micah's strong one, she passed away into the Life Beyond.

He never murmured, rarely showing any sign of the grief which burned to ashes all thoughts of love for any other. He grew tenderer and more loving to all who came within his circle of friendship, and every living creature instinctively trusted him. He was popular with both old and young, and was the ever-ready escort of the "odd one" who otherwise might be left at home.

About a quarter after three the telephone bell rang. Theo flew to the library and took down the receiver.

"Who is it?" she asked. "Oh, it's you, Uncle Poly— What? They did? Good! Just left? Why didn't you come with them? Oh, *I am disappointed*. I wanted them to know you. Yes, I know, but— Come to-morrow, sure! This was so dear of you, I could hug you just as I did when I was a little girl. What? Oh, I don't care a rap, Central may go fish! Thank you, good-by."

They would soon be here! She danced a few turns around the room, from sheer lightness of heart, then seating herself at the piano became so absorbed in her music that she did not hear the carriage as it drove under the porte-cochère. The sound of the doorbell startled her.

"Gee whiz!" she ejaculated, catching sight of the carriage as it drove away. "They are here!"

Johanna was admitting the guests as Theo appeared at the parlor door.

Her welcome was most cordial, and everyone began to talk at once, Bessie filled to the brim and running over with an ever-increasing admiration for Norwood, Jack effusively seconding her remarks in the vain endeavor to conceal the fear that everybody must see that he could not keep his eyes off Theo, and Theo, for the reason that she felt his glances, looking everywhere else but at Jack. Mr. Tilton who was quietly taking it all in was the only normal person in the room. He and his wife were greatly pleased at what they hoped would be the beginning of the thought of settling down on the part of the artist. They had known of Micah Hayden for many years, but this summer had brought about their first meeting. And so Billy rested his arms on the broad sides of his chair, and watched the others. He recalled Theo's heightened color when she first saw Jack, and noticed that Jack was unusually talkative. He sought his wife's eye and slyly winked. Her smile showed him that she understood. Just then Theo called their attention to the view from the window facing the river. Mr. Tilton crossed to his wife's side.

"Moon is in the right quarter, don't you think?" he said in an undertone.

"*Total eclipse!*" said his wife, whereupon they both laughed. Jack turned like a flash.

"What amuses you giddy things?" he said suspiciously.

"Only a little mooning on Billy's part," said Bessie, and then they laughed again.

"Don't you believe her," said Mr. Tilton. "If you'll remind me, I'll tell you some time, Miss Hayden, but Jack wouldn't understand. Better leave him in the dark!"

"Then I think we'd all better go into the light," said Theo, joining in the spirit of jest which she could not understand, but knew instinctively was at Garland's expense. She opened the French windows and led the way to the broad piazza. Rugs covered the floor and wicker easy chairs were placed at convenient angles.

"Where's Micah?" inquired Jack, looking about.

"Oh, I forgot!" said Theo, the color mounting. "He had a telephone message just before noon, to go to the Junction. Some accident, and he had to get there as soon as he could. He said he should drive the car to the limit, for he begrudged the time spent away from you all."

"Whose property is that adjoining yours?" asked Mr. Tilton, looking toward Ledge-lawn.

"Oh, that is the Denman place. It is the oldest estate in this county. You must go over it some time. It is as interesting as the Arms, fully."

Once launched on the subject, Theo told them about the old Judge, of his wife who came from

the glorious State of California, of Richard, and so led up to the more recent history, that of Miriam, whom they would see in a very short time.

During the narrative concerning the child, Jack asked several leading questions, remarking that there was much dramatic incident in the story which he would like to remember.

"And haven't they any idea where the mother is?" asked Mrs. Tilton.

"Only what I have told you, which amounts practically to nothing."

"I guess the Denmans wouldn't mind if she never came for the child, from what you say," commented Jack.

"They have grown devotedly attached to the little girl and are anxious to do, unselfishly, what is best for her. She certainly is a most taking child, so sweet, and pretty as a picture. Here they come now!" and she looked in the direction of Ledge-lawn where Madam Denman, attired in lavender crêpe was just spreading her parasol of the same delicate hue as she stepped out on the broad path leading to the lawn. Miriam, all in white, came skipping by her side, followed by the ubiquitous Bonnie with a big white satin bow on his collar. Bessie gave an exclamation of delight.

"Well, this certainly caps the climax! Will you please, everybody, look at what's coming! Everything has been a perfectly distracting series of moving pictures ever since we tied up to that

old wharf, and now comes a beautiful vision in lavender, a child with the motions of a fairy, and a collie that I almost wish I could swap for the cat I haven't got!"

All laughed and Mr. Tilton held up his hands in mock despair.

"Go slow!" he cried. "Irish blood somewhere in your family! Remember the old song 'And the cat came back'!"

The three were coming nearer, all watching them with increasing interest. Theo's graphic narration of the incident concerning Miriam had greatly increased their desire to see her. As soon as Jack caught sight of the child's face, the whole bubble of mystery burst; there was nothing in it now so far as he was concerned. That Miriam was the daughter of Bettina Germaine Lawton there was not a shadow of doubt in his mind. The same graceful swing to the limbs, and those eyes, so perfectly set and so beautiful in color and expression. "Jove!" he muttered under his breath. "I don't wonder she wanted to see that baby! She is ideal. I must paint her picture some time!" his enthusiasm rising by leaps and bounds.

The afternoon passed quickly and pleasantly. Miriam was very friendly and answered all questions with the same frankness that was so charming in her mother. Jack was carried away by her quaint ways and old-fashioned sayings.

"I'll have to come over some night to your

house," he said, "and go on a pilgrimage with you, may I?" taking her hand and studying the changes of her expressive face.

The dimples deepened as Miriam's lips parted in a peculiar little smile.

"I'll think 'bout it," she said, "I shouldn't want to dis'point you."

"But why can't I go?" persisted Jack.

Miriam looked at Madam and at Theo.

"I know of no reason why he should not go. Do you, Madam?" said Theo.

"Not so far as I am concerned. Answer Mr. Garland, Miriam," said Madam.

Again the dimples flashed in the round cheeks.

"Marta used to say, Marta was my nurse, but she's gone way, way, *way off!*" pointing with her little finger to the great blue heaven, "that people in New York were Phistines and that they were worse than 'Gyptians. And that's why I guess you better not ask to go."

Jack roared. Catching her up in his arms he said:

"Martha was a wise woman, but times are changing, and New York is growing better every day."

"I'm vewy glad," she said. "I'll talk with Moses, and Theo will let you know." She felt glad that she had not hurt his feelings for she was a loving little creature and wanted everyone to be happy. She remained sitting on Mr. Garland's

knee, listening to the conversation of those about her until five o'clock when Melissa came for her. All united in begging Madam to allow her to remain for tea.

"It shall be just as Miriam wishes," declared Madam Denman, sure of her ground.

Miriam knew the inflexible rule about afternoon visits. The little girl slid off Jack's knee and gave her hand to him and to each of the others in turn, with a smiling "Good night." When she reached the opening in the hedge which separated the places, she turned, kissed her hand not only once, but many times, calling again, "Good night!"

After an evening spent in the moonlight on the back piazza the house party separated for the night, all except Micah and Jack, who returned to seats on the broad steps.

"I want to tell you, Micah, what I know concerning that little child's mother," said Jack when they had lighted their cigars.

"Do you know her mother?" said Micah, starting.

"I do, and you have seen her and admired her!" he continued.

"What do you mean?" asked Micah, in surprise.

"Listen! Miss Bettina Germaine, whom you saw and admired in 'The Quakeress and the Sail-

or' is Miriam's mother!" he declared dramatically, watching the effect of his words.

Then followed question after question until Micah became thoroughly convinced that Jack was correct in his assumption.

"The situation is really becoming more tragic every day," said Micah, "I can't for the life of me see what is to be the outcome of it all unless—" whatever it may have been that he intended to say he refrained from expressing, but pulled away on his cigar.

"And you have never seen her all this time?" asked Jack.

"Why, not that I am aware, and I am sure I should have recalled the face had I met her on the street." Again they lapsed into silence. The moon was at the full and its beams were streaking with silver the surface of the placid river. The air was laden with the scent of roses and the crickets' shrill call was the only sound that broke the silence of the night.

"This is indeed a beautiful spot," murmured Jack, throwing away his cigar half finished. It seemed like profanation for him to smoke, he longed to give himself wholly to the allurements of the place. He was beginning to see how Mrs. Lawton might perhaps feel about taking Miriam away. She must have become thoroughly acquainted with all her surroundings, for Micah had said that the story of the finding of the little

girl had been the chief topic of conversation for weeks.

"Cannot you make some excuse to call on Miss Germaine? You might get Mr. Carter to bring about a meeting; he surely could arrange it."

"Why, yes, I could very easily, especially since she is to sing at the Rebekahs' garden fête; I could interview her."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Jack decisively. "In a delicate way you can draw her out, and in the end, by letting her know you are in possession of the facts I have given you to-night, advise her to think seriously of leaving Miriam with the Denmans, for the present, at all events. How does that strike you?"

Micah did not at once reply. He felt it was a pretty difficult thing to go to a mother who was not a bad woman and advise her to give up all that she apparently had to love in the world. He could see the wisdom of so doing, perhaps, but he did not like to be the instrument of torture.

"I'll think it over," he said at length. "Theo doesn't know about this, and I do not think I shall tell either her or Richard, for the present."

Jack acquiesced. "I guess you're right, Micah. One gets hardened by constant contact with the worldliness of a big city. This little change here has been heavenly to me. I don't wonder you always loved this place, it is so restful." He leaned against the lattice covered thickly with the

crimson Rambler, and looked out on the scene before him. A keen longing to abandon the Bohemian life he had led for so many years overwhelmed him.

"Micah, old fellow, I want to tell you something," he began.

"Jack, I know what it is; you are going to ask me to give you Theo. Don't do it yet. I must have time to get used to the thought first."

Jack came to his side and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"How did you know it, Micah?"

"Oh, I read it in the stars," he replied, "in the stars I have seen shining in my little sister's eyes whenever your name has been spoken."

"And may I hope that you will consent, if she returns my love?" he urged.

Micah removed his glasses and began to polish the lenses with his handkerchief, a way with him when he felt nervous, or wanted to gain time to consider a question before giving his decision.

"Theo's happiness is the pivot round which my world revolves, Jack, and I must be very sure that all is well before I give my consent. Of course she is perfectly free to do as she chooses, but naturally she would expect to go with her husband, and make her home wherever he desired. Now, Theo loves Norwood and she loves this home. It is not a bad place to live in, and yet

I do not suppose you would ever feel like living in so small a town as this?" he questioned.

Jack Garland's face brightened as he answered:

"Perhaps once that might have been only too true, but I am sure I should feel very much at home here and perfectly happy, could I have your sister for my constant companion. Then, too, old man, I should want you to stay right on."

Micah's eyes grew dim.

"Thank you, Jack; I appreciate all you have said, but there is one other thing I'm going to touch on. You see I mean to empty out all that is in my mind," and he readjusted his glasses. "I wish you'd give up all this theatrical business, Jack. You don't need it, and it is unsettling for a man of your temperament. I know the drift of the whole thing from A to Z. As a man having an independent income, you can do pretty much as you please. Why not settle down, fix up that big north chamber of ours for a studio, when the happy time comes, and let the world hear from you through your pictures? The prosecution rests," he said, smiling into Jack's happy face.

"There's nothing you have said, Micah, that I do not feel is well worth considering. I shall put up no defense whatsoever. It shall be all as you say, not entirely because you have said it, but because I see that it is for my good, and I thank you." With their arms about each other's shoulders the two men walked into the house.

“And so you think I have a chance to win her?”
Jack asked as they parted at his chamber door.

“I am sure of it. But remember, Jack, Theo is a jewel whose setting must be of purest gold. You know what I mean. God bless you.”

CHAPTER XI

THE BEGINNING OF A FRIENDSHIP

THEO HAYDEN ran quickly up the steps of the Norwood Arms. It was close upon three o'clock, the hour she had arranged by telephone to practice with Miss Germaine in preparation for the garden fête. She was smiling to herself as she entered the office; in fact, she had been feeling very happy all day. A message by long distance from Mr. Garland had set the ball of happiness rolling at nine o'clock in the morning. The yacht was in Portland harbor, and Mr. Garland with his guests were enjoying the beauties of the Forest City, and its suburban attractions. He had just mailed her a letter, he said, but the desire to hear her voice once more was too strong to be resisted.

The night after the yacht left Norwood, Micah told his sister of the conversation he had had with Jack regarding his friend's desire to seek her hand in matrimony. He watched her closely; the drooping eyelids and changing color betrayed the depth of feeling with which she regarded her new friend. Ah, he knew it all before, she never could hide

anything from him. It certainly was a case of mutual attraction, and yet he had had a feeling of the deepest disappointment to meet and overcome. He had always associated Theo with Richard, and he knew that Richard had never shown a preference for any other girl. It had always been his most earnest desire, as he felt it was that of Madam Denman, that some day the two should marry. The thought of any other man, least of all a man of the world like John Worthington Garland, had never entered his mind. However, he had received Jack's promise that he would not ask for Theo's hand for another year, and in that time she would be likely to unmistakably know her own mind, and as she decided, so would be his wish for her.

"And how is Miss Hayden?" inquired the clerk cordially. Theo tossed back the stray locks the wind had blown over her eyes, and selecting a perfect rosebud from the bunch at her belt passed it across the counter to him.

"Oh, I'm fine and dandy, Phil. Here's a flower for your coat, isn't it a beauty?"

"Yes, it is, like the giver."

"Philip, you're catching Uncle Poly's art of flattery, but I know just how much of it to believe. Thank you."

"You wish to see Miss Germaine? She left word she should be in the parlor at three," he said, assuming his professional manner.

Theo glanced toward the door, and in lowered tones asked :

“Have I ever seen her, Phil?”

“I think likely. She goes for a walk every afternoon, and invariably up your way.”

“She’s pretty, isn’t she? Mrs. Thornton says she is just dear.”

“She is a peculiar type. I never saw anyone like her. Black hair, deep blue eyes, and a very clear pink and white complexion. Her features are clean cut and refined. Usually dresses in dark blue for the street. Surely you must have seen her.”

“Are tickets for the entertainment selling well?”

“Splendidly. Sold some this afternoon. You see I don’t usually get away so early, but Mr. Denman has his client from Portland here on that forgery case, and told me to go, as he should lock the door to insure against interruptions.”

“Madam Denman came over just as I was leaving home to tell me about Sapphire. The pickaninny gave her a private rehearsal this morning. You know she is remaining at home so that Melissa may go to the entertainment. Well, Madam said she fairly ached from suppressed laughter. The way that child went through the motions from sitting old Kasper down, to the end of the piece when she mows down the entire army, was convulsing. Oh, ‘The Battle of Blenheim’

will make history for the second time, in this event. Sapphire feels the importance of it all to such a degree that she is affecting the regular stage stride. Melissa is a whole show in herself. She told Madam that she suggested to Garnet that Sapphire was old enough to observe etiquette, and Garnet said, 'For the Lawd's sake, Miss M'liss, but does it come befor' or after Lent dis year?' "

They both laughed heartily. The verbal gymnastics of Cornelia's Jewels furnished much amusement to the inhabitants of Norwood. The clock struck three.

"Time!" she exclaimed; "I'm ready 'on de dot,' to quote Cornelia."

"'On de tick ob de clock,' from the same source," returned Phil.

Theo did not see Miss Germaine when she entered the parlor, but discovered her standing in the embrasure behind the heavy curtains, looking out on the garden.

Since acceding to Mr. Carter's request that she should sing at the Rebekahs' lawn fête, Bettina had been tortured by misgivings. Not that she regretted having consented to sing, but the thought that she, a Rebekah, was associating with others of the Order without acknowledging her affiliation with it, troubled her. Had she shown her receipt for dues to the Vice Grand, Mrs. Thornton, when she called, the difference in the

name on the card, Bettina G. Lawton, from that of Miss Germaine, naturally would have given rise to explanations which she did not care to make at present.

Although circumstances had prevented her from affiliating with any lodge after she left Denver, she had kept her dues paid, and held in high esteem the Order and the principles for which it stood. It gave her a feeling of loneliness, as if she were shut out from what she should be a part of, and it all tended to depress her. The sudden appearance of Mr. Garland, the mystery of his visit, together with the keen longing to see her child, contributed their share toward the feeling of sadness.

It had been her intention on coming to Norwood to communicate at once with the Grand Master, but on hearing from Mr. Carter and Cornelia how deeply the Denmans had become attached to Miriam and how tenderly she was being cared for, the unselfish mother-love kept putting off the day when she would separate her child from the friends who had taken the little stranger to their warm hearts. And now the end of the summer's vacation was in sight! She sighed audibly.

Theo coughed slightly. Bettina turned, recognized a guest, and came forward, a smile on her lips. Here was the girl with the shining hair whom she had so often seen romping with Miriam and the collie.

“Miss Hayden?” she asked, offering her hand.

“Yes, Miss Germaine, I am Theo Hayden. I want to thank you very much for so kindly consenting to sing for us on Wednesday night. It will be a great thing for us to have the benefit of out-of-town talent.” She intently regarded the face before her, vainly striving, as others had done under similar circumstances to place the resemblance. It baffled her.

“I hope I shall not disappoint you,” said Bettina, leading the way to the piano. “Here is some music, if you will kindly look it over and make a selection. I am familiar with all, so one piece is the same as another to me.”

Theo eagerly accepted the invitation and the two heads were bent over the music for the next quarter of an hour, at the end of which time ten songs, all of a high order but varying in style, had been laid one side, from which Theo would make selections.

“You see I am going to be a real piggy-pig-pig, and ask you to sing all these. I dearly love music and all yours is first-class. Haven’t you anything sort of catchy, something on the popular order you could give as an encore?”

Bettina had left with her effects in New York all music of a popular character, preferring for practice only classical pieces.

“This is all I have here. I put in those old ballads for I do so love them; I am glad you like

them, too. As for anything else, if you can suggest something, perhaps I may know it, and could sing it without notes."

"Let me see," said Theo, knitting her brows. Then, with sudden animation, "I wonder if you know that song from 'The Quakeress and the Sailor'? The one with the pretty waltz refrain? I think it is called 'The Song of the Rose,'" and turning on the piano stool she played the air. Looking inquiringly into Bettina's face, she said:

"Do you know it? That is, well enough to sing it without notes?"

The actress thought it would be enough of a surprise to sweep Theo Hayden off the piano stool if she should tell her how familiar she was with every note and rest in the entire musical score. It was with difficulty that she kept her composure, the impulse to laugh was so strong.

"I know the song you refer to," she said, "if you will play the accompaniment I will sing it as I remember it." Her tone was politely indifferent.

How sweetly she sang! Closing her eyes, she seemed lost to everything but the strains of melody that flowed from her lips. Theo played with inspiration. She caught from the singer the tempo about which she and Micah had had so many discussions, and accompanied her with taste and skill. Wheeling around as the last note died away, Theo, her face aglow, exclaimed with ardor:

"Why, Miss Germaine, that is perfectly glorious! I don't believe, in spite of what Micah says—Micah is my brother—that the actress who sang that song could surpass you in your rendering of it. You really must sing that, won't you?" and she laid her hand impulsively on Bettina's.

The evident sincerity of her words, together with the kind familiarity, touched the girl's homesick heart. Tears sprang to her eyes and trickled down her cheeks. She hastened to wipe them away, ashamed of her show of weakness.

"I'm a little blue to-day," she said, endeavoring to excuse herself, "and music always intensifies such feelings, I think."

"Sort of an attack of 'indigo-gestion' as Cornelia once described it when I said that I was feeling blue," said Theo, and in the laugh that followed the clouds lifted. "Of course you know about Cornelia and her jewels?"

"Yes, Garnet, Mrs. Jackson, does my laundry and very nicely, too. Did you know that they had decided to name the baby 'Diamond,' and call him 'Di' for short?"

"I knew that a family conference was to be held on the subject. Well, long may he sparkle! Funny little fellow! By the way, have you ever heard Sapphire recite? If not, you'll have the treat of your life on Wednesday night."

"When Sapphire brought my clothes home yes-

terday she told me she was to take part in the entertainment. She confided to me that she was going to wear an imported dress. When I asked her where it came from she said Grandma got it in Bangor and she knew it was imported because it had 'Custom made' on it. Wasn't that good enough to put in *Puck*?"

"Convulsing!" laughed Theo. "That sounds just like Cornelia. You see everybody knows them for miles around, and since it has become known that Sapphire really has some histrionic talent—she has often amused us by her cleverness—the Rebekahs thought it might be a novelty to have her recite. She'll furnish the comedy all right, never you fear!" She rose and began to arrange the music preparatory to leaving. "I'll take home this song, if you don't mind, and practice the accompaniment a little."

Loath to let her go, Bettina urged her to remain and have a cup of tea on the veranda.

"I'll have to ask you to excuse me to-day, thank you, Miss Germaine," returned Theo, "but I shall see you soon again. I have passed a delightful afternoon and enjoyed so much your singing."

"And I your playing," returned Bettina.

"Thank you again," said Theo, "but 'honest true' as the children say, I have enjoyed the practice, and am selfish enough to wish you lived here so that the pleasure might be repeated, not once

only, but many times. But I presume you will not be here much longer?"

"I may go any day now," Bettina replied, nervously fingering the buckle of her belt. "I hope we may meet at some future time. Perhaps I may come back next summer; I have taken a great fancy to the place." She accompanied Theo on her walk along the avenue. The sunlight streaming through the branches of the trees was rich in color, the shadows were deepening, and the birds were singing their sunset song.

"My brother and I will call on you after the concert, Miss Germaine. It is our loss that we have not met you before. Madam Denman, our Grand Master's mother, wishes very much to know you. She wondered if, being younger, you would not waive ceremony and come to her, after Mr. Denman calls as he intends doing. He thinks, as do we all, that it is very kind of you to sing at the concert. It is to be regretted that it comes so near the close of your visit, but if you return another year we will make plans for many good times." Her eyes were luminous with the thought of the happiness of the coming year. They shook hands at the avenue gates.

"So until Wednesday evening, good-by," said Theo, looking into the clear, fathomless blue eyes. Where had she seen those eyes before? Where?

"Good-by, Miss Hayden, this afternoon has been a greater joy to me than you think."

So the two girls parted, to go for a time their separate ways, until Love, with magic touch, should draw them together again in a friendship warm as love, a love like friendship, steadfast and true.

CHAPTER XII

A FATEFUL EVENING

THE pavilion on the evening of the Rebekahs' garden fête was like a bit of fairyland. The strings of Chinese lanterns hanging from festoons of evergreen extended from the arches overhead to the trees bordering the platform. The stage was hung with draperies of pink and green, while garlands of sweet peas were artistically looped below the footlights, across the front of the stage. The night was clear, and sweet with the freshness that comes after a shower which had fallen in the early forenoon. "Rebekah weather," said Uncle Poly, as he called attention to the clearing skies and the brilliancy of the sunlight.

The attendance promised to tax the capacity of the pavilion to its utmost; the cause was a popular one, nearly every man in the community who cared for fraternal societies being an Odd Fellow and the desire for a Home was widespread. The stables of the Arms were filled long before eight o'clock, and as the hour drew near, the street at the side was dotted with carriages, the horses tied to trees and fences.

Sapphire went early to the Norwood Arms to make her toilet. As the costume her grandmother had given her included white stockings and shoes to match, it was decided that she should dress at the Arms and avoid the long and possibly muddy walk when so suitable a place was near at hand. After being inspected by the entire assemblage, they all started out for the pavilion. Sapphire, her hand in Melissa's, took the lead. Miss Higgins, holding her head very high and with all the dignity of a drum major on parade, kept slightly in advance. The rest fell into line, two by two, Lorenzo with Diamond squirming in his arms, bringing up the rear.

The entertainment commenced on time with an overture played by a string orchestra, composed mostly of members of the Order. Then followed a tenor solo by Philip Grayson, which was enthusiastically received and encore responded to.

Sapphire was next on the list, and from the moment she stepped on the stage, there was no doubt that the house was with her. Her recital of "The Battle of Blenheim" by Southey, was something exceptional in the annals of Norwood. She not only recited the battle, she fought it! The more the audience roared, the more earnestly the infant phenomena endeavored to portray the picture the poem described. When at the close, with fire in her eyes and tumultuous waves of her little thin arms, she declared that "It was a famous

victory," the applause that followed plainly indicated that Sapphire had scored a victory as well. Hands clapped long and loudly, and the small boy whistled and pounded with his heel on the floor. Under instructions from her teacher, whose bosom was swelling with pride, Sapphire returned to the stage with all the energy of a baseball player on a home run. She bowed and bowed, until, embarrassed by the continued applause, she said, "There ain't no more!" and ran quickly from the stage.

"You 'quitted yourself admirable," said Melissa. "I don't believe that Mrs. Leslie Carter herself, at your tender age, could have done better." Whereupon Cornelia proudly acquiesced, declaring that "De signs ob de zodium tol' no lies when dat chile was born." For the rest of the evening she hovered over her grandchild like a big black hen with one little brown chicken.

When number seven was reached there was a fluttering of programs and whispers of "Who is she? Do you know?" were heard on all sides. A round of applause greeted Theo Hayden as she walked across the stage to the piano. A moment later Miss Germaine appeared. She wore a gown of white crêpe de chine and a corsage bouquet of pink roses, the choicest blooms in Mr. Carter's conservatory. As she came gliding toward the footlights, looking out over them to the audience with the magnetic smile that had brought all New

York to her feet, the applause was spontaneous and hearty.

At Theo's request she had selected that ballad so exquisite in its pathos, "I Cannot Sing the Old Songs," which she rendered with rare taste and execution. The audience was spellbound. More than one hand found its way to moist eyes; the tenderness in the full, rich voice was irresistible. In the stillness that followed the last notes you could have heard the rustle of a leaf in the trees. Then the applause broke forth in pronounced sincerity.

Miss Germaine gracefully acknowledged the compliment and withdrew. Not so Theo; she remained at the piano, and with the familiarity born of knowing everybody, and the knowledge that, like *Oliver Twist*, they "wanted more," she nodded her approval and joined in the applause. Bettina came forward with her happiest expression, and with as keen a desire to please as had ever actuated her when appearing before a critical metropolitan audience, sang the song that had made her famous, and which is remembered in Norwood to this day. As Theo played the opening chords, she looked in the direction of Micah, who, with the Grand Master and Uncle Poly were occupying seats at the extreme end of the pavilion. She knew she was about to give "the boys" a surprise and her eyes sparkled.

"Why, that's the song from the opera you heard

in New York, Micah," said the Grand Master gripping his friend's arm, his eyes fixed on the singer.

"Pretty, isn't it?" returned Micah nonchalantly, but with heart beating fast with excitement. Yes, Jack Garland's suspicions were well grounded. Only one look at the eyes of the singer was sufficient for him to trace the resemblance to little Miriam. He looked at Uncle Poly, wondering if he too had been impressed with anything like what was passing through his mind, and then it occurred to him that Mr. Carter had been in her society daily for the past six weeks. Could he have guessed the secret and kept it to himself?

During the applause that followed, Richard asked him if he knew anything in particular about the singer?

"Uncle Poly said she registered from New York," he said evasively.

As an encore Bettina had begun singing the last verse, the one during which she flings a rose into the audience. That always made a great hit in the city, and Norwood was no exception. She was obliged to respond to a fifth recall, and they would have kept her singing until every rose had been thrown from her bouquet had she not shaken her head, and accompanied by Theo, bowed her way off the stage.

Behind the scenes all was excitement. Theo caught Miss Germaine in her arms and kissed her on both cheeks; the other ladies, though not so

demonstrative, were equally appreciative of her generosity in their behalf, and thanked her effusively. Pleading fatigue, Bettina withdrew just before the last number, declining any refreshments which were to follow the entertainment, and went alone to the hotel.

Micah kept a close watch of the Grand Master's countenance while Miss Germaine was on the stage. He saw the lines between the level brows deepen, a habit he had when puzzled or thinking profoundly. With a directness that forced Micah into immediate alertness, he said, "Who is it she resembles Micah? *Who is it?*" he repeated slowly and emphatically, with a look that seemed to go straight through him.

"There is a certain familiar look about her, still," Micah's tone was purposely light, intended to cover, if possible, any suspicion of interest in the singer, "it may be the lure of the song. She's a winner, all right!"

"Don't," said the Grand Master, with instant resentment of the familiarity the last words implied. He felt as if he were defending one of his own; and why? What was there about the personality of this strange woman that appealed so strongly to him? Then a great light burst in upon him illuminating his mentality. His face grew deadly pale; quickly he closed his eyes to shut out the scene and steady his shaking nerves. As

Bettina left the stage he arose, and under cover of the last applause, left the pavilion.

Micah dared not follow, nor if he had would he have deemed it wise to do so. In the first place, he did not wish to intrude on his friend's privacy; and, secondly, it would never do for both of them to be absent at the close of the entertainment. In his secret soul he knew that Richard had recognized the resemblance so remarkable between mother and child, and that the shock of the discovery was more of a strain than he could quietly endure.

Micah had read his friend's thought aright. As Richard Denman walked along, hardly realizing that his feet were treading the earth, so absorbed was he in thought, the words that Uncle Poly had repeated as coming from Dr. Johnson the night Joseph Powers passed on, kept recurring to his mind with lightning rapidity. "*You tell Mr. Denman for me, that when he comes across a woman with eyes to match that baby's, he will have no difficulty in locating the mother of his treasure.*" They burned into his brain like fire. The eyes of the singer and the eyes of the little girl sleeping in the nursery at Ledge-lawn, were as one and the same.

If she were Miriam's mother, why had she not made herself known? What could it all mean? Then the trained legal mind asserted itself; he

must prove whether this startling resemblance was real or fancied. He felt for the package of envelopes in which the remittances had come from New York, and the two notes; he always carried them with him. He drew them from the inner pocket of his waistcoat, and held them in his hand as he walked rapidly into the hotel. The place was deserted save for the presence of the big white cat asleep on her favorite corner of the broad mantel in the office. Now was his chance, while all were at the garden fête, to make a comparison of the writing which he had in his possession with the signature of Miss Germaine on the hotel register.

He turned back the pages and ran his forefinger along the list of names. There it was, under the date of June 19th, and the last remittance was received on the 17th of the same month.

“Miss B. Germaine, New York City.”

He laid the note that had been pinned to the little white coat on the book, and carefully compared the letters. The style was identical; the capital *M* in Miss was the same as that in Miriam, and the smaller letters exactly the same wherever they appeared in the notes. The capital *B*, was just like that in the signature “*B. L.*” The handwriting was not an ordinary type, it had distinguishing characteristics; it was plain to see they were all written by the same hand. Again he scrutinized the text, letter for letter, arriving again at the same conclusion. There could be no

doubt about it. He should call at the Arms the first thing in the morning. He replaced the rubber band carefully around the papers and returned them to his pocket, closed the register, and approached the door leading to the hall. A light step on the veranda broke the stillness. He hesitated, then passed into the hall to come face to face, under the full blaze of the electric light, with Bettina Germaine!

Startled, she drew back, smiling apologetically. Then with a shock came the realization of whose face was turned toward her, and she stood transfixed, her color mounting higher and higher. Richard had stopped short on meeting her. To his excited imagination she seemed a creation of fancy and not the woman of flesh and blood he had seen upon the stage not twenty minutes ago.

Instinctively he removed his hat, and looked fixedly at her with an intensity born of great emotion. His lips trembled as he half extended his hand to her, when, with the swiftness of a deer she ran past him, up the long stairway, and down the corridor to her room.

"Wait!" he cried, and in his eagerness started to pursue her, but stopped as his foot struck the stair. No, it would never do for him to seek her unannounced, and at this hour. His innate respect for woman held him in check, he could not compromise her by such an act. Speak with her

he must, and to that end he should see Uncle Poly on the morrow. He dashed out of the hotel, down the steps and walked rapidly along the avenue. He was completely carried away by the thought of what she meant to him and his. Laughter and hum of voices of the merrymakers came floating on the breeze. The sounds awoke him to the demands of the hour. The spirit of adherence to duty came to him with impelling force. He straightened his shoulders, threw back his head and retracing his steps soon became a part of the scene of sociability. Once more he was the Grand Master of the I.O.O.F., greeting with cordial hand clasp the out-of-town members, exchanging words with those whose attendance had contributed toward the success of the entertainment, and in every way possible lending his personality toward forwarding the pleasure of the evening which was destined to mark an epoch in his life.

When Bettina reached her room after her encounter with the Grand Master, she was in a state bordering on collapse. Every nerve in her slender body was throbbing. She threw open the door and reaching the bed fell upon it completely exhausted. Her cheeks were burning, but her body was as cold as ice. She buried her face in the pillow; it seemed as if she could see the eyes of the one who had protected and cared for her little

child, looking accusingly at her. What would he think when he found out as perhaps he already had from Miss Hayden, that she had been here all summer and never had made herself known to the kind hearts that had so loved and cherished her precious baby? She had expected to meet him some time, but not like this! Uncontrollable sobs shook her frame, it seemed as if her heart would break. What should she do? Again and again the question confronted her. It seemed as if she was continually being brought face to face with the hardest situations. Then the thought came, "Is this the way to solve your problem? Is this the way to know peace?"

Rousing herself, she arose and turned on the electric light, removed her gown, sighing as she placed in water the roses Mr. Carter had given her with such kind words, wishing her success. She did not like to see them fade so soon, beautiful roses, "smiles of Love." Would she ever feel that she could sing that song again? She loosened the heavy braids of hair, slipped on her kimono, and turning out the light stepped onto the balcony. What a haven of rest this vine-covered nook had been to her! Looking out from it, what scenes had passed before her eyes! Each day she had watched for the coming of the Grand Master as he made his call at the post office. By the aid of the field glass she had watched her little girl

frolicking with the collie on the far-away lawn, or sitting under the shade of the maples with Madam Denman. Would she ever view such scenes again? The voices of the people on their way home from the entertainment came to her ear. How happy they were! She fell to accusing herself of heartlessness, and she wondered what the Grand Master must think of her! She had tried to do what had appeared to her to be for Miriam's welfare. From all sides she had heard of the devotion surrounding the little child; even Garnet had told her that they "hoped the mother never would come to claim the baby." She leaned over the balcony as Theo's voice came to her in sprightly conversation with Mr. Denman and strained her ears to listen to the merry banter. Then she knelt, her head in her hands resting on the railing:

"O Father!" she cried, "teach me to live closer to Thee! Let me not be selfish, but submissive to Thy will. Show me as Thou hast ever done in time of need, the way for me to go. I care not for the thorns if only my child is sheltered in Thine arms."

The soft night breeze fanned her cheeks, refreshing them like a healing balm. The moonlight bathed her in its heavenly rays. Her heart, reaching out for guidance to the One Source from which all blessings flow, became less turbulent; a sense of beautiful peace stole over her. Divine Love, the Comforter, dissolved all fear and strengthened

her. Rising, she stretched out her arms toward Ledge-lawn, and with the unselfish mother-love vibrating through all her being, murmured:

“Farewell, farewell, dear Grand Master; I leave my treasure with you and with God.”

CHAPTER XIII

THE FLIGHT OF BETTINA

THE sun was rising behind the mountains as Bettina sprang from her bed and looked at her watch. Just quarter to five. All doubt, fear, and anxiety had been dispelled and a certain steadfastness of resolution had taken their place in her heart. Henceforth she would walk fearlessly on, hampered by no misgivings.

She reached for the time table on the shelf beneath the little stand by the bedside. At eight o'clock the train left Norwood to connect with the day Pullman for Boston; if she arrived there on time, she could take the night train for New York, reaching there early in the morning. Hastily she indulged in a cool bath, and then began packing. An adept in the task through long practice, the work was soon done, and when the first bell for breakfast sounded at seven o'clock it found her dressed for the journey, even to her traveling cap.

Mr. Carter was behind the desk when she entered the office, greeting him with a cheery "Good morning!" An expression of surprise crossed his face as he recognized her.

"Yes, Mr. Carter," she said, interpreting his glance, "I am leaving you this morning. It is unexpected, but I received news last night that impels me to shorten my visit somewhat."

Uncle Poly's eyes fell, and he began to sort the letters for the mail with nervous fingers. He had had suspicions for some time as to her identity, and he felt perfectly sure that in some way Richard's sudden departure from the pavilion the evening before was connected with her resolve to leave Norwood. He had grown very fond of this quiet, retiring little woman whose personality had appealed to him from the first.

"Life is made up of partings, Miss Germaine," he said as he tied a piece of string around the letters and handed them to Hiram who had just come in the office. "There are many who will regret not being able to see you, and express the pleasure your very beautiful singing afforded them. Our Grand Master, for one," he paused, intentionally, and looked at her with a steady gaze. She felt the force of the look and her eyes sought the floor. "He will be sorry not to see you to-day. He asked me to inquire what hour would be most convenient for you to receive him."

Bettina turned away and looked out of the window. She wondered how much this little man with the gray mustache and imperial knew of last night's adventure. Not trusting herself to meet his eyes, she said:

"Please tell him that I regret not being able to see him, and that I am very glad if in any way I was of service in so good a cause. And will you give my love to Miss Hayden? Tell her I appreciated her words to me last night, she was indeed friendly," her voice trembled as she spoke. Opening her satchel she asked him if she might not pay her bill now instead of after breakfast?

"As you wish, Miss Germaine, as you wish," replied Mr. Carter, taking down the ledger and turning the pages to her account. Sitting at the desk she addressed some envelopes and slipped a bank note in each with a few written words. This task accomplished, she bestowed a last longing look on the familiar objects in the dear old office. Sappho was still sound asleep on the mantel, the clock in the corner was solemnly ticking away the hours; it was exactly quarter past seven. The cozy arm-chairs were all in their accustomed places—how homelike it all was!

"May I ask you to give these to George and his family, please, Mr. Carter?" she said, handing him the envelopes. "I don't want to be thanked for what is in them. They all have been so thoughtful of my comfort; and parting from you seems like leaving a friend."

Uncle Poly's eyes were suspiciously moist as he came from behind his desk and laid a gentle hand on the girl's arm.

"You will come again, my child, you will

come again," he repeated. A lump was rising in his throat; he didn't like to have her go like this, and he wished that Richard could have a talk with her before she left town. It was such a sudden move on her part that it gave him no chance to maneuver and give the Grand Master an opportunity to make good his intention of seeing her.

Leading the way to the dining room he instructed George to send in breakfast for himself as well as for Miss Germaine, who was leaving unexpectedly on the early train.

When Pearl communicated the news to her mother, Cornelia expressed her feelings in no uncertain terms. "Yous didn't 'spect she was gwine to stay all winter, did yo'?" retorted her spouse, rescuing the gem pan just in time to save the whole baking from falling on the floor as Cornelia raised her hands in a gesture of mingled protest and regret. Her eyes flashed and her ample bosom heaved. With hands on her hips she gave George a withering look as she said:

"Miss German ain't no ornery summer vistor, she hab temper'ment, an' I guess I knows quality folks when I see um." Then the feeling of resentment gaining on her, "What yo' know 'bout 'finity ob soul, yo' nigger, yo'?" lapsing into old plantation terms, as she frequently did when she felt annoyed. "Lan' sakes! I's uncommon sorry she's gwine! Scrutiatin'ly sorry. It do discom-bobilate me suffin' drefful!" Straightening her

turban she wiped her hands on her apron and set herself to work filling a luncheon box with the choicest dainties the well-stocked larder of the Arms afforded.

"I feel it in meh bones, dat she'll come back, an' meh bones can be derpended 'pon. A puffedly elegant lady!" declared Cornelia for the third time in the last half hour, as she and her daughters lined up on the veranda when Miss Germaine accompanied by Mr. Carter emerged from the hotel. Before leaving the breakfast table Mr. Carter had given George the envelopes that Bettina had intrusted to him for the servants. Cornelia's adjectives had been completely exhausted trying to impress on her husband and the "Jewels" the honor that had been conferred upon them by Miss Germaine's generosity.

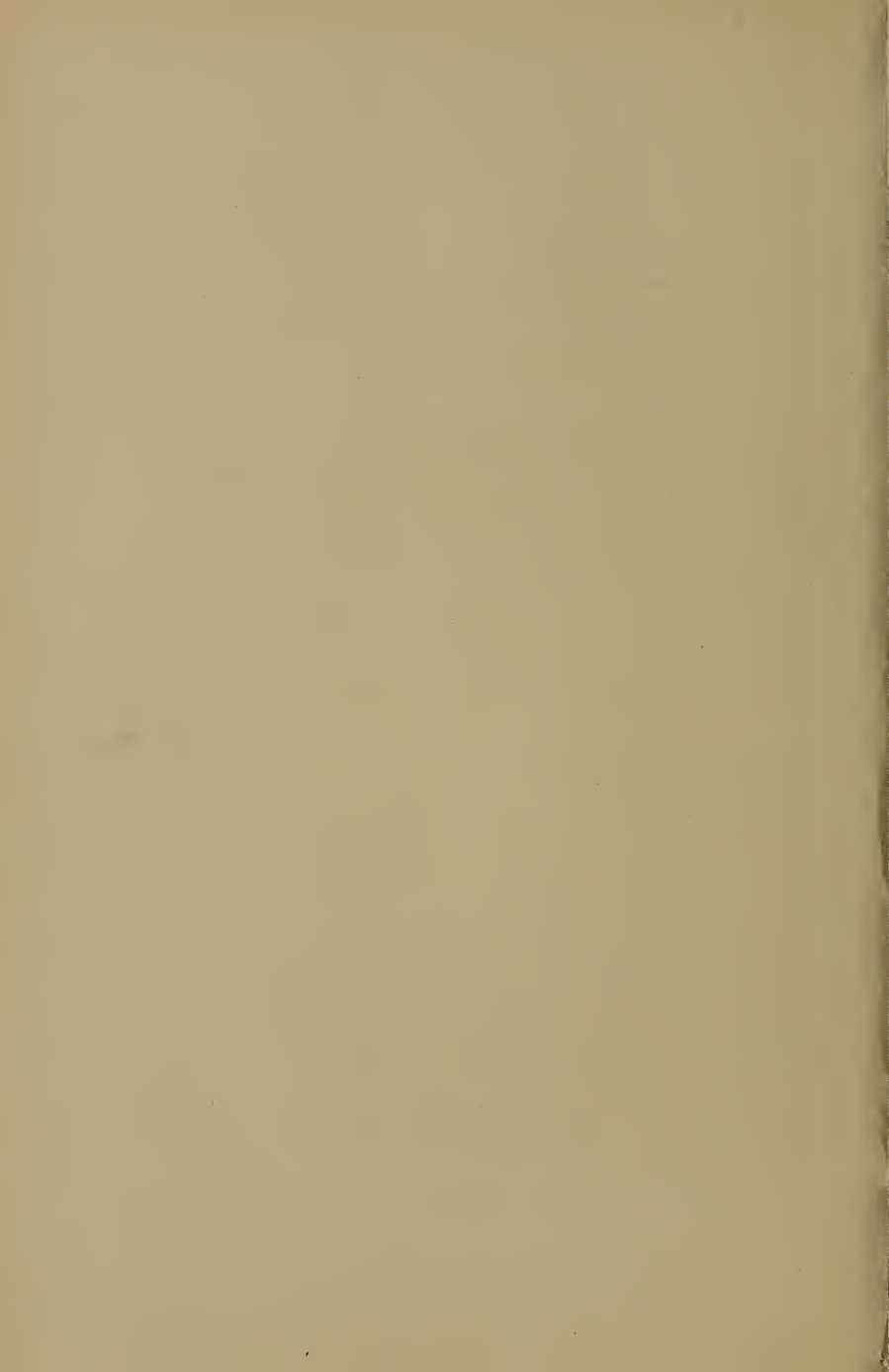
"It ain't so much de money, tho' it's very 'ceptable, an' comes in right handy tuh hab 'bout de house, but de way she done it shows quality. Don' yo's fergit dat."

Just as Bettina stepped into the coach, George, not to be outdone by his family who had equipped themselves with dust cloths and towels to wave at the departing guest, rushed into the office to reappear, bearing the American flag which had stood in the corner behind the desk. This he unfurled, and waved over the head of Cornelia, who with raised arm, like an ebony Goddess of Liberty, stood waving a dish towel, her Jewels beside her.

PART THIRD

TRUTH

“Truth is the highest thing that man may keep.”
CHAUCER.



CHAPTER I

MRS. LAWTON'S LETTER

A REGISTERED package for you, Mr. Denman," said Philip Grayson, as the Grand Master entered his law office a week after the encounter with Miss Germaine in the hall of the Norwood Arms.

"You signed the card?"

"Yes, sir; it was a return receipt." Mr. Denman hung his hat on the rack behind the door and passed into the office marked "PRIVATE."

On the desk was the morning's mail, assorted and neatly piled, the registered letter in blue envelope lying by itself. He glanced at the superscription. It was in the handwriting of Miss Germaine. In the upper left-hand corner was the sender's address, "Mrs. B. G. Lawton, No. — West Fifty-seventh Street, New York City." He caught his lip between his teeth as he ran a knife along the side of the linen-lined envelope. The contents were bulky, a package of bonds with paper wrapped around them, and a letter. The veins on his forehead swelled and an anxious look crept into his eyes. He threw himself into his

chair and began eagerly to scan the closely written pages:

“NEW YORK, August 9, 19—.”

“Do not think me utterly devoid of gratitude as well as the natural feelings of a mother in doing as I have, dear Mr. Denman. I may have made a mistake in not heeding your call and speaking with you that night after the concert, but I was so taken by surprise at meeting you that I was really frightened, and like a coward ran away as fast as I could.

“It had been my intention all along to call at your home, and after trying to express my gratitude and appreciation, take my little girl away with me. But when I heard from so many sources how attached you all had become to my baby, I hardly knew what to do. I had some very selfish misgivings—I feared that perhaps already her affections had been weaned from me. I recall how she cried for Nurse Graham. ‘Sweetheart,’ she called her, and how to soften the blow of separation, I told her that Nurse had gone away to grow young and well again. You see, through force of circumstances, I had been able to see her only in the summer, and naturally she became more attached to the one who gave her constant care and affection. When, after Miss Graham died, I realized that Baby was without a home, I was in a terrible quandary.

“I had left the cast of a New York attraction to come to West Newbury at the time of Miss Graham’s last illness. She had been my own nurse, and remaining with us as a member of the family, naturally took the place of guardian to my little child, when after losing my husband I had to face the world alone.

“I dreaded to take her to a New York apartment, away from the freshness of the country air, and place her in the hands of a nurse I knew little or nothing about. I appealed to Dr. Johnson to help me. He knew of no place, and advised, since I ‘was a woman who believed in Divine guidance,’ that I should take Miriam with me and trust to God to lead me into the right way.

“And so it came about, that when I went to buy my ticket that night at Trowbridge Junction, I heard the agent talking to some one about the dedication of the new Odd Fellows’ Hall, and of you and your mother. He dwelt on the beautiful home life you led, and, well, it was all done in a flash, so to speak.

“I was behind the screen when you and Mr. Hayden entered. I liked your face and bearing, feeling instinctively I could trust you. You were an Odd Fellow, I, a Rebekah, therein seemed to lay my right of appeal. I did pray hard with every breath I drew to be rightly guided, and suddenly the conviction came that I should leave her, and—you know the rest.

"But I longed for her day in and day out. It seemed as if the end of the season would never come, when I should be free to go to Maine and see her dear little face. And when I came, and saw and heard how good, how loving, and how kind you and your dear mother had been, I fought a fierce battle with Self, and having conquered, I simply could not stay. The meeting with you settled it all; and so I left Norwood without going to your home.

"But I am hoping before very long to have Miriam with me, and to that end I am planning. I am giving up my stage career. The life of an actress does not appeal to me in spite of my success, and I have been very successful. I am going back to my old home in the far West and shall start anew. I want a little home and Miriam, and to that end I shall strive.

"Inclosed are some bonds I have had made over to you as Miriam's guardian. They represent the little legacy that came to me from my mother's estate. I want you to use the income as you feel is right and proper for Miriam. I know I can trust you. If it should happen that I never come for her, I know you will be faithful to your trust, and bring her up as an Odd Fellow's daughter should be.

"Perhaps I am making a mistake, but I am trying so hard——"

The letter fell from his hands, a mist dimmed his sight. It seemed as if an iron hand had gripped his throat. He buried his face in his hands as he leaned heavily on the table. "Poor little mother!" What a struggle she must have passed through! And they all the time hoping she would never come for Miriam. What a diabolical thought, and she so trusting! Something must be done, and done quickly. She must not go so far away without a word from him. He must know her destination. All these thoughts passed through his mind with lightning rapidity. An actress! Surely she must be the Miss Germaine that Micah was always talking about! Yes, he was sure. All this accounted for Micah's peculiar manner and evasive answers the night of the concert. There was no time to be lost. He would telephone Micah to come to the office as soon as possible.

The call was answered by Micah himself. "I will be right over," he said. The Grand Master took up the letter, read the few concluding lines, so touching in their childlike faith, and then glanced at the date. It had been written the 9th, and mailed the same afternoon, according to the stamp on the envelope. This was the morning of the 11th. In some way he must communicate with her before she left New York. To that end he would consult with Micah.

In response to the electric bell, the clerk came in and, seating himself at the side desk, prepared

to take down dictations for replies to the letters awaiting Mr. Denman's attention. The work was just completed as Micah bustled in. He had been detained by a long-distance telephone message. His face was flushed and he was very warm from his hurried walk. Mr. Denman dismissed Philip with the injunction that he must not be interrupted, and then turned to Micah.

Micah had been wondering what this sudden summons could mean, and the sight of the Grand Master's face, so drawn and white, gave him somewhat of a shock. Before Mr. Denman could speak, Micah said:

"What in the world is the matter, Dick? You are white as a sheet. Aren't you well?" His jovial face was deeply solicitous.

"Read this," was the Grand Master's reply, passing him Bettina's letter. Micah gave a low whistle as he read the address of the sender. So that was the direction from which this ill wind blew. He perused the letter very carefully, ignoring the bonds, and placing all in the envelope laid it on the desk. Removing his glasses, he wiped them with more than ordinary care, passed his handkerchief over his face and around his neck, and in a hesitating voice said:

"Before we discuss this letter—which is, I suppose, what you have called me here to do—I want to tell you something that has been on my mind ever since Jack Garland came here. We thought

it might be better not to tell you, but I am sure, as matters have developed, you should know all that there is to know."

There was an interval of silence during which Micah walked to the window, hands thrust in his pockets, nervously jingling his keys. His lips were set. He realized that the time had come when he must make a "clean breast" of all that Jack Garland had told him of Bettina Germaine, and he found it to be a more difficult task to set about than he had expected. He walked back and resumed his seat beside the desk. He hardly knew how to begin the story, and finally said in a faltering way:

"Garland told me quite a lot about Miss Germaine, or Mrs. Lawton, I should say. He has known her for some time."

A flush leaped to the Grand Master's forehead. He clinched his hands and a sudden vague fear of he knew not what possessed him. He had heard of Jack Garland's escapades years ago when in New York, and these reports had not increased his respect for the man. Evidently Micah had been convinced that he no longer played the rôle of a gay Lothario, or he would not have consented to permit him to become a suitor for Theo's hand.

Richard had persistently kept away from Stonyhurst since the yachting party visited Norwood. He was still fond enough of Theo to devoutly desire that her happiness should be complete, but

Jack Garland was the last man he had thought might be her choice. And now, to have him come upon the scene in association with Miriam's mother! A wave, very much like jealousy, swept over him.

"What is she to him?" he asked, his brow wrinkling.

Pretending not to notice the significance of his question Micah replied:

"Garland backed the show she made such a hit in, you know, 'The Quakeress and the Sailor.' Also, he painted her portrait as *Friend Cecelia*. Never was anything other than friendship pure and simple between them. I could swear to that. I never could have consented to his addressing Theo if I didn't know he had walked the chalk line as far as going the pace is concerned. He's a man of the world, all right, all right, and always will be to a certain extent, I suppose, but always was his own worst enemy, that I know. It hit me pretty hard to have him fall head over ears in love with Theo, and she with him, straight as a die, right off the bat, but he's got to prove his worthiness, he's got to prove it."

The Grand Master moved uneasily in his chair; he smoothed his brow with an unsteady hand as if he would thereby brush away the thoughts that surged within his brain. Such a host of unpleasant recollections were clamoring for admission. He looked determinedly into space while Micah again

removed his glasses and gave them another vigorous polishing.

Micah cleared his throat, and starting at the very beginning, told him all that Jack had said that evening on the piazza at Stonyhurst. The Grand Master let him come to the end of the narrative without interruption; then he put him literally in the witness box and cross-examined him on all points involved.

"Did Garland tell you Mr. Lawton's given name? Did he say what city they resided in? And from what place she came to New York?" he asked in conclusion.

"No, not that I recall," Micah replied, breathing freer now the worst was over and Richard his normal self again. It was evident that the Grand Master had taken the passing of Bettina Germaine very much to heart. The lawyer did not question further. His face cleared, the mist had gone from his gray eyes, and rising, he took a turn about the room bringing up at Micah's side with this remark:

"Look here, old chum, I want you to do something for me and do it right away, now, this very moment! You are the only one I can trust, and you know I am tied here for the present. Will you do it?"

Micah was on his feet in an instant. Looking the Grand Master squarely in the eyes he said:

"Try me and see. I never failed you yet."

"So be it," declared Richard Denman, as he seated himself at his desk. Opening his check book he rapidly filled out one to Micah's order, and handed it to him.

"Take the one o'clock from the Junction and make New York to-morrow morning. Go to this number," pushing the letter toward him, "and see Mrs. Lawton. Tell her you have come at my request; that I received her letter and understand her feelings, but she is taking a wrong view of the whole situation. She must let us know where she is to be. Impress it upon her, Micah, that her present attitude is not just to herself or to Miriam. Why, man alive, what can she be thinking of? Suppose, suppose something should happen to Miriam—" again the iron hand held his throat; a sudden catch in his voice stopped him for a second. Micah reached for his hat. Hurrying on, the Grand Master said:

"You know how to plead our Baby's cause, Micah. I feel that we have been a lot of traitors in our thought toward this unselfish mother. Tell her how we all have been blessed by this precious little treasure that came into our lives through her willingness to sacrifice herself. If you can't persuade Mrs. Lawton to come here and see Miriam before she goes West, tell her she must write to us. Impress that particularly upon her, Micah. Now go, dear old fellow, and God be with you!"

"He always is, Grand Master, and I am ever

at your service." The Marshal saluted his superior officer and hastily left the building.

Immediately at the close of the evening meal, Lorenzo Jackson with the infant phenomena beside him, brought the low phaeton around to the porte-cochère. The Grand Master and his mother were going for a drive along the shore road. The day had been humid, a regular dog-day, and Madam had felt the oppressive heat; a drive in the cool of the evening would refresh her.

Miriam's face brightened as she saw Sapphire. The little girl jumped out of the carriage and stood by the vine-covered pillar, twisting one thin leg around the other, all the time grinning sheepishly at Miriam. Lorenzo was standing at the horse's head.

"Sapphire, come up and play awhile with Miriam," said Mrs. Denman, kindly regarding the little dark face. "You may stay until Melissa is ready to put Miriam to bed. You would like Sapphire to stay, wouldn't you, dear?"

Miriam beckoned to Sapphire. The little thin legs scrambled nimbly up the steps. Madam kissed Miriam, and descended to the carriage. When the Grand Master stooped to say good night Miriam whispered:

"I'll be 'sleep when you come back, Witchard. Are you and Sweetheart going for Bettymuz?" the color coming and going in her soft cheeks.

The Grand Master looked into the trustful blue eyes, so like another pair that had been haunting him all day long. He kissed her gently as he said, "Not to-night, Baby mine."

"But some night you will?" urged the child, her expression full of simple trust and love.

"Yes, darling, please God," he murmured, patting the golden head. Bonnie followed him to the carriage; Richard motioned him back. The dog instantly obeyed, returning to the piazza beside the children.

"Good night, Sweetheart! Good night, Witchard!" called out the little girl as the horse started on a trot down the avenue between the sweeping elms.

"Good night, Miriam. Good night, Baby mine," they called back.

CHAPTER II

A MOTHER'S COUNSEL

THE end of the peninsula was reached before the Grand Master touched upon the events of the morning. His mother opened the way by saying that she saw Micah with Theo go past just about noon time, driving the automobile at full speed. It must have been after two before she heard the machine on its return and then Theo was alone.

"I wondered that she did not call me up, or come over this afternoon if Micah had gone away. He never has left town without coming to say good-by to me"; and Richard noticed in the deepening shadows, that she looked disappointed and a trifle grieved. The Hayden children had seemed almost like her own, growing up side by side, so to speak, with her boy, and the love she felt for the orphans had always been very tender. She did not like to think that Micah could forget.

Richard drew in the reins, bringing the horse to a standstill; they were far beyond any dwellings, only the beach between them and the great stretch of deep blue sea. The breeze was invigor-

ating and sweet. The long range of mountains on the opposite shore, sloping sharply southward rose above the water in tints of grayish pink as the last rays of the sun gleamed behind them. The ripples on the water reflected the soft sky coloring; the waves fell lightly on the sands. The horse reached out his head and sniffed the salty air.

"I am very much afraid, Duchess, that I was responsible for Micah's doing as he did. He was hard pressed for time, as I sent him away on a mission which seemed to me to admit of not a second's delay. He must have had to scorch to catch the express from the Junction. I'm glad he didn't miss it, Micah is a trump!" he said, bringing down his hand in a pat upon his mother's slender one as it lay near him.

She looked up inquiringly. What could this mission be?

"It was all very unexpected, but I hope and believe good results will follow." He then told her of the registered letter, also all that Micah had confided to him about Mr. Garland, and Bettina's talk with Manager Williams.

Madam nodded her head confidently as she said:

"I thought Mr. Garland took a great deal of notice of Miriam that afternoon. You know I told Theo to tell them about her? Well, he seemed perfectly fascinated with the child. She certainly was very bright and is always prettily behaved.

He hardly let her out of his sight all the time she was there. Is the resemblance to the mother so striking, Son?"

His eyes fell beneath her searching gaze; his pulse quickened. "Was the resemblance so striking?" he repeated to himself. Then aloud:

"As much so as the bud is to the rose. The eyes are the same, but the mother's hair is as dark as midnight." He turned and looked far out to sea at a two-masted schooner beating her way along. In a second a rampageous diminutive tug-boat hurried by to meet the little craft and tow her safely into the river and on to the city.

Madam felt that now she knew the reason for her son's preoccupied air ever since the night of the garden fête. She had then attributed it to the shock that Theo's attachment to Mr. Garland had been to him, but now she knew she had been mistaken. She would venture asking him the question that had been on the tip of her tongue more than once since the concert.

"You never told me if you were presented to Miss Germaine, dear?"

He caught his breath, for a while it seemed as if his emotions would overwhelm him. He had not felt that he could trust himself to tell anyone, not even Micah, of the crowning event of that fateful night. But his mother was his mother, she would understand where others might question, and so he told her how impressed he had

been with the marvelous likeness of Miss Germaine to their little ward. He had noticed it from the moment she appeared on the stage; it was simply unmistakable. His brain was in a whirl. He could not trust himself to meet the many who would expect to see him after the performance, while his mind was so disturbed. So he left the pavilion, and examined and compared the signature in the hotel register with the letters he had received from "B. L." Then came the unexpected meeting and flight of Bettina. He drew a long deep breath of the sea air. What a blessed relief it was now his mother shared his secret; it made the memory doubly precious. He turned the horse toward home letting him take his own gait. The animal ambled along tossing his head and occasionally nipping at the overhanging branches. The wall of reserve having fallen, Richard talked almost incessantly of Bettina, at times reproaching himself for the covetous love he felt for his little Treasure.

"But, dear, you should not feel so," remonstrated his mother. "No one could help loving that child. She could warm a graven image into feeling affection for her. You know she was placed in your care, literally, so you are not to blame in any way. I think you have done just right about this letter, and I hope Micah will see her." Then becoming reminiscent she added, "It is all so perfectly delightful, just like a story. I

do hope you will let me tell Uncle Poly—not about your meeting, dear, no one need ever know of that—but about her parents. Why, I remember so well the time that Mr. and Mrs. Hayden, Uncle Poly and his mother, your father and I, went to Portland to a concert given by the Thomas Orchestra, a famous one in those days, and the soloist was Mr. Germaine. He was a very handsome man, tall and dark as a Spaniard, and such a voice! No wonder his daughter can sing! He married a Maine woman, a beauty she was, Judge Houghton's daughter, of Bath. So you see, our baby comes from good stock on her mother's side at least."

"Even admitting the rouge?" said Richard mischievously, reminding her of that afternoon on the lawn, and Micah's unfortunate remark that had sent the baby flying to the beach. But Madam was not daunted in the least, indeed not she!

"Circumstances alter cases," she said decidedly, ignoring his teasing smile. "The little witch had probably been amusing herself with her mother's make-up box, just as she loves to rummage in my box of laces and in my jewel casket. She seems to know instinctively what things are for; I never knew a child who asked so few questions. Oh, no, I feel that her mother is a right-minded, sincere woman, and it shows she is not tempted by the life that the stage almost always implies, or she would not give up her career on the very eve of

triumph." She drew closer to her son and rested her head against his strong shoulder. He placed his arm around her as he said, looking into her dear face:

"Tired, Sweetheart?" he drew the light wrap closer. With the going down of the sun a cool breeze had sprung up.

"Only aweary, dear. At times I feel a sense of weakness come over me. It is probably the effects of this dog-day weather. I am very fond of dogs but not of dog days!" and she lifted her chin, smiling at him. Then, in a serious tone, "In spite of my own selfish remarks, I have felt at times an enormous amount of sympathy for Miriam's mother. If we love her so, how much must she. Separation between mother and child is unnatural and only justifiable under unusual circumstances." She slipped her hand through his arm; he pressed it lovingly to his side.

"You can understand, can't you, Mother mine, how I felt when I met her that night at the Norwood Arms? I wanted to catch her right up as I do Miriam and bring her home with me. It seemed as if I could hear her heart crying out for her child like some poor mother-bird whose little one has flown away. Oh, it seems like weeks and months since that night, and yet it is only seven days!"

"Only seven days!" repeated his mother. "How much can happen in that time! Do not

allow yourself to be anxious, dear child, you have made no mistakes so far, and knowing you as I do, I trust your judgment implicitly. It would never do to force conclusions. What you have told me to-night has not depressed me in the least; on the contrary, I feel quite elated."

The lights of the town were all ablaze as they drove along the main street. Many automobiles were out, and the stoops and piazzas were filled with people enjoying the cool breeze of the starlit night.

"Trust, dear Son, trust. Keep your thoughts so full of good that restless, unsatisfied longings can find no abiding place. That is the secret of true happiness. Fear and Doubt flee before Love and Truth. Then you will have the strength and courage given you to meet whatever comes. I want you to realize even after your term of office is ended, and another is filling the place at the head of our beloved Order, that the true Odd Fellow is always a Grand Master, if he lives up to the highest standard that the name implies. 'To visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead, and to protect and educate the orphan' calls for a nature loving and strong, yet gentle as that of a child. It is hourly and daily under all circumstances to emulate the One Grand Master."

CHAPTER III

“SHE HAS CAME BUT SHE HAS WENT”

THE late Pullman out of Boston reached New York on time the following morning, and Micah Hayden immediately sought the Manhattan Hotel, there to refresh himself after a hot night on the train. It was just ten o'clock when he left the hotel and sauntered along Forty-second Street to Sixth Avenue, where he took a surface car to Fifty-seventh Street. On reaching the number given him he found it to be a large apartment hotel.

In answer to his inquiry for Mrs. Lawton, the man at the desk informed him that she was no longer a guest there, having left the city that morning at nine o'clock. Micah stared incredulously. He tapped the floor with his foot, it seemed to him as if the very ground was slipping from under him.

“Can you give me any information regarding Mrs. Lawton's probable destination?” he asked, “I am from out of town, and my business with her is urgent.” The man shook his head.

“Sorry, sir, but she left no address.”

Thanking him, Micah passed out of the hotel. After a few moments of deliberation as he tarried on the sidewalk, he decided to seek Jack Garland at the studio which was in the Carnegie Building, only a short block away.

He rapped lightly, at the same time turning the knob, the door yielded and he passed into the studio. To all appearances no one was there. The heavy draperies at the door of the inner room were drawn aside. He advanced cautiously and looked within. It, too, was vacant. A half-finished portrait of a gentleman wearing the uniform of a naval officer rested on the easel. The palette with fresh paint upon it indicated that the absence of the artist was but temporary. Micah stepped back and examined the canvas critically. He was a judge as well as an admirer of art. Jack was certainly doing splendid work, at all events as far as execution went. The confident, satisfied expression on Micah's face deepened as he saw about him evidences that Jack had been sincere in his expressed intention to devote himself to painting.

He was still young, the prime years of life were yet before him, and the depth of his affection for Theo Hayden was stimulating his desire to win her approval by excelling in his work.

Micah strolled about the big room with its wealth of furnishings, the accumulation of years spent abroad. Statuary of Italian marble and

rare bric-à-brac from the far East were scattered about in artistic confusion, the softest Persian rugs covered the floor and rich Oriental draperies hung from the walls.

The canvases were few but selected with critical taste. Micah missed many of the old familiar pictures which at one time had been a fad with Jack and was not displeased; on the contrary, it lifted from his mind the last atom of uncertainty regarding Jack's honesty of purpose. Noticing the morning paper on a table near the window, he sank into a wicker arm-chair and began reading. Presently the door flew open and Jack Garland entered. His welcome was genuine as he recognized the face behind the *Herald's* pages.

"Well, this is an unexpected pleasure, old fellow," he cried, seizing Micah by the shoulders and giving him an affectionate shake. "You're the one to give surprises. Theo isn't here, too, is she? Hiding behind any of these draperies," as he ran his hands over the hangings. "However, you're next best." He drew a chair up close; it seemed good to see Micah with his fresh color and honest brown eyes, so like Theo's.

"Now tell me, how fares my lady? She's all right, isn't she?" an underlying tone of anxiety in his voice. Micah looked at him indulgently.

"Oh, foolish lover! Thy lady-love is very well and sends thee greeting. No, I am not here on business of my own, but for Dick Denman. Aw-

fully sorry you missed seeing Dick. It's about Mrs. Lawton. She left Norwood suddenly the day after the garden fête, as Theo wrote you, and it seems she has been here in New York; have you seen her?"

"Then you must have missed my letter; I wrote you day before yesterday." Jack lowered the shade, shutting out the strong sunlight, and resuming his seat settled back for a good old-fashioned talk.

"I'd like to sit here and visit with you 'until the cows come home,'" returned Micah, "but to tell you the truth, Jack, I'm in a decided rush. Haven't written a line on my special for Sunday and to-day is—well, let's get down to business. I'll tell my story first; then you can have your innings."

"Play ball!" said Jack, as he pushed the quaint silver cigar box and lighter toward his friend.

When Micah had finished explaining the reasons for his being in New York he took a cigar, and leaning back in his chair, crossed his legs.

Jack immediately took up the thread of discourse and in his concise but rather languid manner of speaking informed Micah that he had been away from the city for a week's cruise with Captain Sangster whose portrait he was painting, and had arrived home only yesterday.

"I had been over to the office to see Williams just now," he said, laying his cigar on the rest.

"He telephoned me before I was up this morning. I had a wire from him at Old Point Comfort telling me that Miss Germaine was in the city and I fully expected to see her on my return. I wrote Theo the same day I got Sam's night letter. Yes, as the old farmer said when asked if a certain visitor had been to his place, 'She has came but she has went.'"

Micah glanced uneasily at his watch.

"Well, little Germaine is no more. She bowled Williams off his feet, so he said, when she came into the office and told him 'flat footed' to use a favorite expression, that she was done with the stage—had cut out the whole business. Sam tried to bluff her at first by saying that we should hold her to her contract, but she said she had no heart for acting. When he saw she was on the level he asked her what she thought of doing if she left the profession. She told him she was going West where she was raised and would teach vocal music and sing in church. Oh, she'll make good no matter where she is or what she does. Mighty clever little girl and straight as a string. Sam's very fond of her, and although he was pretty well cut up, he told her to turn her costumes over to Ruth Lawrence, her understudy, and to just chirp up and be her old happy self again. It's all on account of the little girl. Can't say I blame her, now I have seen the child. She never did seem to care a rap for the *furore* she created. I know

more than one man who lost his head over her, but she had such a kind way she could turn anyone down without antagonizing. She never incurred the enmity of man or woman. Sam tore up the contract before her, which, by the way, had never been signed. He declares her going away in June without signing was what brought us this bad luck, but that's his little superstition; it cuts no ice with me."

"Shall you continue with the management?" inquired Micah.

"Only to the extent of leaving my money in until the end of the season; then I shall pull out for all time." His direct glance caused Micah to sit up straight and smiling as he nodded his approval. "But I shall go to Boston in January while Theo is there. I want her to hear the piece often enough to enjoy the really beautiful music. I only wish she could see Miss Germaine as the Quakeress."

"She was absolutely perfect," said Micah.

"That's only too true. However, she knows her own business best. She will make some man a fine wife one of these days," Micah lifted his hand to interrupt.

"If I had forgotten to ask what her late husband's given name was I should have written myself down an ass. Tell me, do you know it, and where she hailed from?" Micah took out his notebook.

"You'll be spared that humiliation, old man, for I can supply all the information. She told Sam his name was Josiah Lawton, newspaper man. Denver was the place. Why, you've read his stories of Western life. He wrote for the *Syndicate* while you were on the *Herald*."

"You don't mean to say that her husband was Si Lawton?"

"The same man!"

"Well, I'll be switched!" declared Micah. "I met him in this blooming old town eight years ago!"

"Perhaps you'd like to know one thing more. He was the presiding officer or—what do you call him?"

"Noble Grand?" suggested Micah.

"Yes, that's the title. He was Noble Grand of the lodge there in Denver when he was sent on that fatal assignment."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Micah, "and poor little girl! She's had it pretty rough, Jack; she can't be thirty yet."

"She's just twenty-six years old, but I've seen her when she didn't look a day over sixteen. I'm sorry I could not have seen her before she left. It's Denver she's heading for, beyond a doubt. Must you go?" Micah was drawing on his gloves.

"Yes, I must go to the hotel for my grip, and if I keep moving I can catch the Knickerbocker at one."

"I'll go along with you, Micah," slipping the catch to the Yale lock Jack fastened the door, and the two passed along the corridor to the elevator.

As they came to Huyler's Jack went in and purchased three boxes of candy. His selections were speedily and appropriately made. A round box with the picture of a golden collie on the cover contained marshmallows for Miriam. To Madam he sent chocolates in a satin box with violets painted on it, and his choice for Theo was a heart-shaped box filled with Scotch Kisses.

"Tell Theo it was mighty good to see you. My love to her." An indescribably tender look always came into his eyes as he spoke the name of his lady-love, a look that can be inspired by only one emotion. Micah loved to see it; it warmed his heart and brought back in memory sweet the blissful days of long ago. He gripped Jack's hand hard at parting. The trip, although a disappointing one in some respects, had had its compensations.

"Take care of yourself, Jack, and don't go to the other extreme and apply yourself too closely to work."

"Don't you worry about me!" laughed his friend as he released his hand. "You Odd Fellows have a pretty good grip, I guess, by the way you take hold."

"It's the 'grip' that holds all right! But don't

think I shall waste any sweetness on you; I'll leave that to the ladies," and he gave a comprehensive look at the boxes.

"You always were a *candid* man," was the audacious pun Jack called after him as he ran for the train.

"Oh, *fudge!*" returned Micah, from the vestibule of the Pullman as it drew out of the station.

CHAPTER IV

FESTIVITIES AT LEDGELAWN

THE Grand Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows of Maine held its annual session in the city of Portland the last of October. Richard Denman, the retiring Grand Master, was duly elected Grand Representative to attend the next session of Sovereign Grand Lodge which would convene the following year in Denver, Col. His heart beat fast beneath his regalia as he thought what that Western trip might mean to him. Only the week previous he had received a reply to the confidential letter which he had written to the Grand Master of the State of Colorado asking for information concerning Mrs. Lawton.

The letter stated that Mrs. Josiah Lawton was at present in Denver, where she had formerly resided, and had established herself as an instructor of vocal music. She was a member of the Rebekah Lodge and in good standing; both she and her late husband were personally known to the Grand Master and were held in the highest esteem by all who had known them.

The thought that he might see her again was

very comforting and would help to tide him over the long intervening months.

The year had been an eventful one in the history of the Order in the Pine Tree State. Its interests as a benevolent institution had been materially advanced, many valuable decisions had been rendered, and the growth of the Order especially in the Rebekah branch, were subjects of congratulations which poured in from all parts of the State. To feel that one has performed his duty to the best of his ability is always gratifying, but to receive the unqualified commendation of the entire community is the acme of praise.

On his return home Richard Denman resumed his law practice with renewed zeal. He had made rapid strides in his profession during the past year, which had indeed been a strenuous one, and the proposition that he should be elevated to fill the vacancy soon to be made by the retirement of one of the judges on the Supreme bench was strongly advocated by both political parties.

To have leisure to enjoy the pleasures of home life was the greatest boon to Richard Denman. The old habit of running back and forth between Ledge-lawn and Stonyhurst was resumed and the sociability was delightful. Uncle Poly gave a grand Thanksgiving dinner to his friends and neighbors at the Arms. One hundred enjoyed his hospitality and all proclaimed Cornelia the most

precious of jewels that famous hostelry had ever held in its setting.

The holiday festivities in the little circle around Ledge-lawn were much more elaborate affairs than they had been for many years. Miriam had a large Christmas tree and Micah in the rôle of Santa Claus, being too stout to actually come down the chimney, made a spectacular descent of the veranda roof and entered by the window to the accompaniment of jingling sleigh bells. The effect was so realistic that Diamond Jackson gave him but one affrighted look then yelled loud enough to be heard a mile away; and Bonnie's hair bristled up on his back until he scented a friend and constituted himself his bodyguard. There were gifts for everyone, some being in the form of jokes which caused much merriment.

A tiny package directed to Miriam came on Christmas eve. It contained a slender chain of Roman gold with a pendant in the form of a tiny dove set with pearls. On the back was engraved "Miriam from Mother."

With the New Year came the usual work to which all lodges look forward with more or less pleasure, the installation of officers. Madam Denman, to the gratification of all, was able to assist in the work of installing the officers of the home lodge.

Theo went on the long anticipated visit to Boston the day after installation. "To take lessons

in singing and also in the Art of making Love ” as Micah facetiously remarked. She returned home the last day of February, and early in March Mr. Garland came to Norwood on a visit.

It was at this time that Madam Denman gave a large reception in his honor to formally announce Theo's engagement. The function was a charming one from every point of view. Many friends, including members of Mr. Garland's family, came from out of the state. The old house was transformed into a bower of roses, and the ballroom which had not been used since the Judge passed away was reopened. A string orchestra hidden behind a screen of palms discoursed music during the entire evening, the later hours of which were devoted to dancing until “ Sir Roger de Coverley ” led by Madam and Uncle Poly closed the festivities at midnight.

“ I don't know when I have had such a perfectly glorious time,” declared Bessie Tilton as she and Theo, with Jack and Mr. Tilton, were talking with Madam and Richard after the guests had departed. “ Cornelia's supper was accurately described by her diminutive spouse in whose ears I had been sounding its praises. He said, ‘ It suttently was a masticated piece!’ The whole affair from beginning to end has been absolutely flawless. But it's only what I told mother one might expect from this fascinating place. There's none other like it the world over, believe me.”

CHAPTER V

MIRIAM RECEIVES A PACKAGE

THE cuckoo in the clock had just called out the hour of four on an April afternoon when Miriam, with Bonnie beside her, took up her station at the library window to watch for Richard's return home. When she caught sight of the tall figure swinging along the avenue she waved her hand in greeting. As he came up the steps she noticed he had a flat parcel under his arm. With the collie at her heels she ran to meet him at the door.

"Something for me, Witchard?" cried the little girl, looking inquiringly at him and then at the thin package. Richard did not reply; he patted the round cheek, and laid the parcel on the hall table while he removed his overcoat. "Something for Bonnie, p'raps?" she suggested, still regarding the mysterious package.

He took her by the hand and together they went into the library where Madam was lying on the lounge in the inglenook. Richard kissed his mother, then drawing a chair close to her side he motioned to Miriam to bring her little arm-chair into

the circle around the open fire. He began to untie the cords that were around the package. Addressing the eager little one leaning against him, he said: "This package is addressed to Miriam G. Lawton. Who can she be? Do you know anyone by that name?"

How the eyes flashed between the thick lashes! She jumped up and down clapping her hands excitedly.

"For me? Witchard, and you never let me know!" and she looked wistfully at the package.

"Oh, are *you* Miriam G. Lawton?" he said, his face very serious, but the eyes twinkling.

"As if you didn't know, Witchard! Please, what is it? A picture book?" She climbed up on his knee and took the package in her little hands.

"I really cannot tell you what it contains, Baby mine, but being older and considerably wiser in the ways of the world, I think I could guess pretty nearly. It came in the mail this afternoon."

"A package by mail for me!" exclaimed the child in awed tones. It gave her a feeling of great importance to learn that something addressed to her had come through the mail. She breathed hard as he removed the outer wrapper of thick brown paper. Then two pieces of cardboard were disclosed; when these were laid aside photographs were found. Miriam, intently watching his hands,

instantly recognized the pictures and exclaimed gleefully:

"Oh, it's Bettymuz, my dear Bettymuz!" and pressed them to her lips.

Tears sprang to Richard's eyes; the little break in her voice and the kissing of her mother's pictured face was most pathetic.

"Show Sweetheart the pictures, Baby. She wants to see Bettymuz, too," suggested Richard.

"Yes, darling, show me, please," said Madam, stretching out a slender hand. The child slid from his knee and came to her with them.

"This is my Muzzer," she said, a touch of pride coloring the childish voice.

She was a very beautiful woman, this mother of their little Treasure. The resemblance to the child was more striking in the profile view. There was the same low forehead, the nose slightly more aquiline than Miriam's, the same delicately curved lips, rounded chin, and small ear close to the shapely head.

The other picture was full length. The gown was the same she had worn on the night of the concert, even the roses on her corsage were arranged in the same way. Every detail of her personal appearance was indelibly imprinted on Richard's memory. The child looked from one to the other.

"You have a very lovely mother, Miriam," said Madam, reading the thought of her little charge,

it was so apparent what was passing through the child's mind. "I am going to write to her to-night and acknowledge the pictures for you, if you would like me to do so."

Miriam caught the hand that held the picture and kissed it; she was a very impulsive, loving little one.

"And you'll write in big, big letters how glad I was to get the pictures! And tell her, Sweet-heart, please, that I do want to see her sumfin' drefful!"

"There's an address on the wrapper, unless my eyes deceive me, Richard," said his mother.

"Yes, I just copied it in my notebook. It is Denver, Mother, Denver!" and his voice was buoyant with happy anticipation. "You know I go there in September to Sovereign Grand Lodge!"

CHAPTER VI

THE TIDE OF DESTINY

THE summer with all the glory of the roses came and passed, but no Bettymuz. Miriam, loyal ever, still remembered her mother in the nightly blessing, and many were the messages sent in long letters which Madam Denman had written weekly to Mrs. Lawton since the receipt of the photographs.

"One picture," she wrote, "we have hung in the library where all can enjoy it, and the other is over Miriam's little bed where she can see it the last thing at night and the first in the morning." Invitations to visit Norwood had been urgent and sincere, but Bettina felt that she had her heart's problem to work out before she could dare trust herself to meet again the one whom she had always thought of as the Grand Master.

Faithful to the memory of her dead husband, the thought of love for any other man had never entered her mind until the magnetic glance that flashed from Richard Denman's eyes to hers that night in August, kindled a love far deeper and stronger than had ever come to her. This knowl-

edge was what kept her from sending him her address in the letter she wrote him from New York. She felt, even in thought, the influence of his personality. It held her captive in spite of all she could do. The width of the continent was no bar to the love between them. He had never penned her a line. Madam was the medium through whom all messages were sent; yet she felt he often thought of her as she did of him.

It was the closing day of the session of Sovereign Grand Lodge and the week had been an exciting one to Bettina. She had met several of the representatives at homes where she gave lessons, but the one she longed most to see had not yet gladdened her sight. Madam had written that her son would attend the session, and she had seen his name in the daily paper in the list of arrivals.

She paused by the entry table of the boarding house which she called "home," and looked over the pile of letters the postman had just left. There was one addressed to her in an unmistakably masculine handwriting. She hurried into her studio, the front room on the parlor floor, and without removing her wrap, tore open the letter. The blood surged to her face as she read that Richard Denman was in the city and would call on her that evening.

Divesting herself of coat and hat, she hung them in the closet, and taking out the carpet sweeper ran it around the room in an effort to

tidy it a bit. They had been short-handed in the house and her room had not received the usual weekly sweeping. She carefully dusted the piano, the chairs, and whisked the dust from the long narrow frame that hung above her writing desk. It contained the pictures of Miriam, snap shots which Madam Denman had sent her. There was the little girl looking straight out from the picture, the eyes wide open and the smiling lips disclosing rows of even little teeth. The next was a picture taken in front of an open fire, Miriam in a little chair with the collie by her side. Then came the little girl in her nightie sitting on Madam's lap. Last in the row was a view of the child with her arms around her guardian's neck, her cheek pressed close to his. What a comfort those pictures had been to her! She loved to look at them. Her step was light and free as she moved about the room.

How much they would have to talk about! Through Madam's letters she had heard of all the happenings in Norwood. When Theo's engagement was announced she had written a letter of congratulation to Mr. Garland, receiving an immediate and very appreciative reply. A letter from Theo had told her of Micah's meeting with her husband years ago in New York. All these things had tended to strengthen the bond between her and the friends in Norwood.

It was half past eight when the doorbell rang.

One of the boarders who had volunteered to assist Mrs. Noyes ran up the two flights of stairs to Bettina's little hall room and breathlessly announced the presence of a gentleman in the studio.

Bettina did not need to look at the card to learn who was there. She smiled as she extinguished the light; she smiled as she went downstairs, and as she entered the room she was still smiling, an expectant light in her eyes.

His back was toward her as she came in. He was standing by the desk looking at the pictures in the long narrow frame. He did not notice her light step, but the closing of the door caused him to turn instantly. As he came toward her he recognized the glorious eyes with their jet-black lashes and the brilliancy of her smile. A lump came into her throat as she looked in his face and felt his earnest, passionate gaze.

He took in both of his the hands she extended in the frankest manner.

"I have had to wait a long time to see you, Mrs. Lawton," he said; the emphasis on the word "wait," though slight, was pronounced. He led her to a low chair beside the couch on which he seated himself. He still felt the loving pressure of the hands that had rested so confidently in his, and the light that had shone in his eyes was reflected in the tender look she bent upon him. It seemed so wonderful that they should be together, he could hardly believe the reality of it all.

"I wanted to come to see you the very first thing after I arrived," and he gave a boyish laugh, "but you see, when a lot of men get together it is difficult to break away and steal off alone." His voice vibrated with the happiness of seeing her. All the restlessness, the doubts, the intangible dread of he knew not what, that had tortured him since that night at the Norwood Arms, had vanished in the knowledge that she was sitting there beside him. Her nearness filled him with a feeling of happiness unlike anything he had ever known before. Intuitively he knew that she loved him as he loved her.

"Tell me," she said when she had found her voice, "how is your mother and my little girl?"

A shadow passed over his face, as he replied, "Mother is not as strong as I could wish, but I believe a visit from you will set her up wonderfully. She is counting on your coming. As for Miriam, oh, she's a sunbeam! Grows taller and stronger every day. You will notice a great change in her. When she got it through her little head that I was going to see you, I detected a pretty strong inclination on her part to ask to be taken along, too. She spent hours at the desk in the library scrawling messages to you. Perhaps I shouldn't say 'scrawling,' for I think she prints very well for such a little girl. Oh, I didn't bring them with me to-night," interpreting her glance, "I wanted to be sure of a very good ex-

cuse to come again before I leave town to-morrow."

"As if you needed an excuse," she faltered, yet smiling with him. "I wish I could express half that is in my heart. I feel completely at a loss for words. I hope you understand?" She stopped quickly for fear that she would cry—the tears were glistening on her heavy lashes as she looked at him and noticed for the first time that his face was much thinner than when she had seen him last. He let his hand rest in sympathetic touch on hers.

"You know we are very near to each other, naturally, in our love for Miriam," he said in gentle tones, anxious to lift the strain that he saw was upon her. "I quite understand all that you would say, so words are needless. I wish that I could tell you how good it seems to be here. What a streak of luck it was that Lodge should meet right here in the very place where you are! I cannot feel, though, that it was merely chance that made it happen so."

"Oh, no, it was not chance!" she said earnestly, clasping and unclasping her hands. "I was brought up to believe that as a child of God happiness was my rightful heritage. I had only to trust and wait. If I do the best that I know how all that is rightfully mine will come to me, and it is the same with you. John Burroughs in his poem 'Waiting' expresses very nearly what I mean. I

often repeat his words when a feeling comes over me that I must do something more than trust." She lifted her eyes to his as in a low, musical voice she recited:

"Serene, I fold my hands and wait,
Nor care for wind, or tide, or sea;
I rave no more 'gainst time or fate,
For lo! my own shall come to me.

"I stay my haste, I make delays,
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine shall know my face."

"How quickly the evening has passed! I did not mean to stay so late," he said, pressing her hand in his as they lingered at the door, "but you see, we had so much to talk about."

"It has been the brightest, happiest evening I have known for many a long year," she replied. "Now don't forget that you are coming to-morrow."

"As if I could!" He did not add that he should think of nothing else in the meantime. His heart was brimming over with the joy that his anticipations had been more than realized. He lifted his hat and ran lightly down the steps. Her eyes followed him; she loved to watch the free swing

of his limbs and the erect carriage of the broad shoulders.

True to his word, the following evening found Richard Denman in the studio with Mrs. Lawton. The hours had slipped by only too fast. He rose to take his leave.

"Remember," he said, striving to conceal the sorrow that he felt at parting, "you have promised to visit us in the early summer. But that seems such a long time ahead! Can't you come for Christmas? Do! And welcome in the New Year with us!" His eyes and voice were filled with passionate appeal. He held her hand in a clasp so close that she could feel the beating of his pulse. Her own heart was responding. Without a moment's hesitation, she said:

"Every day will be a stepping stone toward the consummation of that happy time. I dare not say I cannot come; I dare not say I will: but when the right hour strikes, God willing, I shall come, dear friend, and oh, the joy of it! I wonder if you realize fully what it means to me?"

"Do I?" he said, his every thought unfolding love for her. "I think I do, for I know, dear Mrs. Lawton, what it will mean to me; 'God willing' as you have said."

CHAPTER VII

MOTHER AND SON

WHY didn't you wire me to return?" Richard Denman's voice was strained to sharpness in his great anxiety. He had just arrived at Trowbridge Junction on his way back from Denver, and had found Micah Hayden waiting for him with the automobile. His mother had been ill, Micah said:

"It happened the day after you left, Dick. Baby found her fainting, and with most remarkable presence of mind in so young a child, called for Melissa as loudly as she could, but never left Madam's side until she came—stood by like a little soldier. Melissa sent her over to the house with a message for Theo to telephone Dr. Strong. Fortunately Doctor was at home and came immediately. I wanted to wire you so that you might get the dispatch at Chicago, but your mother would not hear to it, and as Doctor assured me there was no immediate danger, I thought best to let you have your visit as free from anxiety as possible. I only did what we all felt was for the best."

"Is she better now?" said Dick, putting his hat under the seat and adjusting the cap Micah handed him.

"Oh, yes, or you would have heard from me. She is able to sit up all day now."

Dick turned up his coat collar and seated himself beside Micah. It was just like his dear old chum to come to the Junction to meet him and spare him the lonesome wait of three quarters of an hour for the up train. Then, too, the ride in the clear September air would be a pleasure. There must have been a slight frost, for here and there a spot of brilliant crimson appeared among the brown and green foliage. The machine was going at a rapid speed. It seemed to Richard that his thoughts revolved as rapidly as the swift-turning wheels.

His visit had been a thoroughly satisfying one. The session had been an enthusiastic and profitable one in every respect and the hours spent in Bettina's company were golden memories. Then came the shock of the depressing intelligence that Micah had just communicated. It did not seem to him it could be true; he must be dreaming.

"What does Dr. Strong say, Micah?" he asked for the third time, and again came the same reply:

"He says she must be very careful; the action of the heart is weak, and—" the words he might have added refused to pass his lips. He pressed hard on the accelerator, the car leaped forward at

full speed: the road was clear before them as far as the eye could reach, and he must give the tension he was feeling an outlet. As they reached Norwood he slowed down; in a few moments they would turn in to the avenue. Micah sounded the horn as they sped along under the elm trees. Miriam heard the call and ran to the door with Melissa who opened it for her master. Theo came running down from Madam's room. Richard threw the robes from him and was out of the machine before it came to a standstill. He ran up the steps, Micah following with the luggage. He clasped Theo's hand warmly, spoke kindly to the maid, and catching Miriam up in his arms mounted the stairs two steps at a time.

"You saw Bettymuz?" asked Miriam, her cheeks aglow.

"Indeed I did, Baby mine; she sent so many messages to you I'll have to take a day off to tell you them all." He kissed her repeatedly as he sat her down at the head of the stairs.

He threw off his coat as he entered his mother's room. The shades were up, everything as usual. The sun streamed in at the window where, in the large Morris chair, his father's favorite, reclined the dear mother, wearing the brown gown with its touch of pink near the face. A vase of Killarney roses stood on the table beside her and the collie, ears up, was lying on the rug. A faint color

tinted her pale cheeks as she saw her son in the doorway.

"Mother!" cried Richard, his voice breaking, the tears springing to his eyes, as he folded the slender form in his arms. Neither spoke, their feelings were too deep for words. It was the mother who finally broke the silence.

"Tell me of Mrs. Lawton, Richard. I was so glad you sent me that night message the day after your call. It was very thoughtful of you, dear."

He seated himself on the broad arm of the chair and looked at her with an expression of deepest solicitude and affection. Miriam, who had been lingering in the doorway waiting for an opportunity to enter, climbed up on the other arm.

"Have a care, Baby," cautioned Richard, "you don't want to have a fall, like Humpty Dumpty."

She wrinkled her little nose as she thrust her feet between the spindles of the arm. Placing a hand confidently on Madam's shoulder, she observed with a superior air which was very amusing:

"Sweetheart says I'm very exspurt. This is my post where I watch over her every day."

Madam slipped an arm around the child.

"She has been such a good girl, Richard, and a very great comfort to me while you've been away. Theo wanted to take her to Stonyhurst, but I could not let her go. She has been as still as a mouse all the time."

“As still as a wee, wee mouse,” put in the child, measuring the size with her fingers.

“And Bonnie has been the best of dogs. See, he has been holding up his paw ever since you came in!” Richard patted the dog’s golden head and shook the extended paw. In his dumb way Bonnie was showing his sympathy for his master.

“I have certainly had the best of care. Everyone has been kindness itself. Our dear Rebekahs have been here daily. You see these beautiful roses? I have had them all along. The brothers, too, have been very attentive. Uncle Poly or Micah have slept here every night since you left. They said I must have a man in the house. But I am so glad to have my boy at home.”

The soft brown eyes dwelt lovingly on his face. The intuition, born of mother-love detected a change; there was a tenderer quality in the deep voice, a softer light in the gray eyes so like his father’s. She read what she had prayed might come before she should close her eyes in that deep sleep whose waking is only in the Great Beyond. The chastening fires of the master passion, Love, were smoldering within that nature deep and strong, consuming in their refining flames the elements of all unlike itself. The knowledge brought the glad tears to her eyes.

When Theo came at four o’clock to give Madam her potion, due at that hour, she took the little girl away with her so that mother and son might

be able to talk without reserve. The moments pressed into hours and still they conversed in low tones.

"And so Mr. Ogden could tell you all you wished to know before you called on her?" his mother asked.

"Yes, Mother; he had known the Germaines from the first of their coming to Denver; he and Mr. Lawton were boys together, the same as Micah and I. Oh, Mother, she is very dear!"

There was no need for further words: his mother knew, Love understands. A strange, sweet happiness filled the room. Throwing his arm across the top of the chair, he laid his face close to her pale cheek. She stroked the thick brown hair with gentle touch. How much she had to thank God for in this dear son! And now another thread had come into their loom of life, a thread that wound itself around the slender one that had been lightly laid beside their own on that night at Trowbridge Junction. The child, and now the mother! It would not be so hard to leave him if Bettina could come into the home and fill her place when she had passed away. She knew the call was very near, and the conviction that there would be one to cherish, love and honor him, her darling son, was like heavenly music to her ears.

"Will you write to Bettina for me, Richard? Write to-night: tell her I want to see her, dear. Tell her to come before the New Year breaks. My

love to her, and do not fail to emphasize my desire to see her soon."

"Yes, Mother mine, I will."

That night he wrote a letter to Bettina telling her his dear mother's wish, and also his own earnest desire that she should come to Norwood soon. The blessing of the little child, whose hand had drawn the unseen cords that bound them together in an all-absorbing love, sped with it on the waves of thought, to plead the common cause.

CHAPTER VIII

MIRIAM FINDS FETTYMUZ

IT had been arranged that the coming of Bettina to Norwood should be in the nature of a surprise to Miriam, and that the mother and child should meet for the first time at Stonyhurst. Madam had been losing ground, the Doctor said, and what would naturally be a very exciting event to the little girl had better not take place at Ledge-lawn.

When Bettina received Richard's letter, she wrote at once to Theo for more particulars regarding Madam's condition. The sister and brother together weighed the matter carefully, and agreed that the sooner she came to Norwood the better it would be for all concerned. Madam did not suffer, no complaint escaped her lips, but she lay in her chair with her face toward the west, her eyes growing larger and more spiritual in their expression as day passed after day. Her smile often rested with angelic sweetness on the little curly-haired child who seldom left her side. Garnet relieved Melissa of the work below stairs so

that the maid could be more with Madam and minister to her wants.

When Bettina wrote that she should leave Denver within a fortnight, Richard at once communicated with Mr. Ogden. That gentleman called on her, and in a fatherly way took upon himself the responsibility of advising her.

"The time has come, it now appears, when you can in a measure repay with loving service the care that Madam Denman has bestowed upon your little daughter. I should go there with the intention of remaining as long as you feel that you are valuable to them," he said. And so the piano was sent back to the firm from which she rented it, and the few household belongings she had kept from other years, to the storage warehouse.

At last the day came when her keys were surrendered to Mrs. Noyes, and with the old familiar suit case once more in hand, she turned her footsteps toward the station, there to take the train for Chicago and the East.

It was late in the evening when Bettina reached Norwood. Richard accompanied by Theo met her with the carriage and together they drove to Stonyhurst where Bettina was to spend the night. In the morning, after the meeting with Miriam was over, together they would go to Ledge-lawn and Madam.

The morning dawned clear as crystal. A flurry of snow during the night had left a transparent

mantle over the lawn. The sun was shining brightly as Miriam emerged from the side door. She had been told that Theo had a surprise in store for her.

The child stood on the veranda for a little while watching Bonnie rolling in the snow, then, drawing on her gloves, she ran across the lawn, her yellow curls dancing under the red worsted cap. The long red coat and leggins made her look like some vivid little bird skimming across lots. The two girls were watching from Theo's bedroom window.

"How she has grown!" exclaimed Bettina. "She is no longer a baby, but a truly little girl." She drew quickly back as Miriam, waving her hand, called out:

"I'm coming! Please let me in!"

Theo met her at the door. Miriam walked into the music room with easy familiarity, and pushed the cap back from her forehead, remarking that it was "werry warm."

"I suppose you want to know what the surprise is, Baby Bunting, eh?" asked Theo, as she settled back in the mahogany rocker with every appearance of remaining there indefinitely. The child came close beside her and looked at her with an expression of great interest.

"Yes, Theo, please, what is it?"

"Well, now, let me see! But first, whom do you love best?"

"Oh, Bettymuz, Sweetheart, Witchard—" she would have kept on through the entire list ending with Bonnie had not Theo interrupted her with.

"But who is *first*?"

"My muzzer," she said without hesitation in tones slightly indignant. "You ought to know that, Theo."

Theo nodded approval.

"How would you like to go to see her?" she asked.

"Go to see Bettymuz?" The eyes opened very wide.

"Yes."

"When, Theo?" The exciting thought made her eyes sparkle.

"Why, now, this very minute. But," she paused an instant desiring to impress the child with the importance of the words that followed, "you will have to go all the way alone."

Miriam started, a cloud of apprehension darkened her face.

"Won't Witchard take me?" she asked wonderingly.

"Richard went to Portland, you know, at seven o'clock."

"He'll come back if you telephone him," nodding her head confidently.

"He knows all about your going and approves. No, you must go all alone." The words came

slowly and emphatically. Miriam's eyes fell but the lids quickly lifted as she cried in a triumphant tone, although the tears were gathering.

"Bonnie will go, he always follows me!"

Fearing a deluge, and feeling a trifle guilty at going so far in testing the depth of her affection, Theo said in a surprised voice:

"Why, you are not afraid, are you?"

The rosy cheeks grew pale. To be accused of fear was the last straw. She threw back her little head, straightened her back, and moving toward the door said in a decided but trembling voice:

"I 'spose some one will tell me where to go. Good-by, Theo."

Theo sprang from her chair and caught hold of the little hand just as it was turning the knob of the door. The staunch little craft had weathered a pretty stiff gale, now she should drift into calmer waters.

"I'll tell you just the way to go, Precious, listen. You have to go to my room first—it's a part of the game—and as you go upstairs you have to call out, good and loud, 'Bettymuz, I'm coming!' Now, trot!"

Determination speaking in every moment, Miriam obeyed without question.

"Bettymuz, I'm coming!" she cried as she mounted the stairs. The voice grew steadier as she reached the top landing. "Bettymuz, I'm

coming!" Theo heard the pattering of her feet along the upper hall.

"Bettymuz! Oh, Bettymuz!" a cry of joy, the sound of hurrying footsteps, and Miriam was clasped in her mother's arms. Bettina's own had come to her at last.

CHAPTER IX

“WHERE THY TREASURE IS THERE SHALL THY HEART
BE ALSO ”

AS Madam had expressed the desire to have Miriam stay awhile with her each evening after the bedtime preparations, it had become a regular habit for the child to remain with her until Bettina retired for the night. The little girl thought it great fun to snuggle down beside Sweet-heart in the great mahogany bed. Wonderful stories were told, and great confidences were exchanged in the moments before sleep came to the child. Bonnie, too, was always there and would often go sound asleep with his head resting upon the foot of the bed, much to Miriam's amusement. To-night as she climbed over to the vacant side, she remarked:

“The pirinage is over, and the childwen are all safe in the Pwomised Land.”

“So your responsibilities are at an end, I suppose?” asked Madam.

“Yes, and I'm so welieved!” she said with a funny little sigh as she clasped her hands outside the coverlet.

PART THIRD—TRUTH

"Miriam has been conducting a long pilgrimage since she came here, as you probably know," said Madam to Bettina. "Quite unconsciously she has led us all into a land of greater happiness than we ever dreamed of." She pressed Bettina's hand in hers as she leaned over to kiss them both good night.

"Bettina, my dear," the words fell naturally and lovingly from her lips, "I feel very happy to have you here; no one could fill my place in this home as you are doing. It is so clear to me that it was a part of the Father's plan that you should place this little child in our care. Never look back with a shadow of regret. Some day you will see it all as I do and realize how great is the reward of those who trust.

"Now, draw aside the curtain, just a little more, please, so I may see the clouds as they go floating by. The moon is near the full, and the stars are always so brilliant these frosty November evenings. I love to think of those lines of Emerson's, you know them?

"Teach me your moods, O patient stars
Who climb each night the ancient sky,
Leaving on space no shade, no scars,
No trace of age, nor fear to die.'"

* * * * *

Richard took the sleeping child from beside his mother and carried her into the nursery where Bettina was awaiting their coming. Carefully he placed her in the little white crib. He pressed his lips gently to the cheeks rosy with sleep. "My Treasure!" he murmured as he drew the silken puff closer around her. Bettina looked with admiration on his strong features, the profile clean cut as a cameo. There was a sensation of fullness at her heart as she saw the expression of infinite tenderness he bestowed upon her little child. Turning quickly, his eyes met hers. The damask hue deepened in her cheeks and spread over her face.

"Bettina!" he whispered. She started, he had never addressed her by her given name before. "Bettina!" There was something vaguely caressing in the tones of his voice.

"It seems as though my very heart lies in the hollow of that little child's hand. Without Miriam and you, I dare not think of what my life would be. I cannot part with her, I cannot let you go." He put his arms around her and held her close. "Bettina, tell me that you want to stay; that the story I read in those dear eyes is the echo of my love for you."

She lifted her face to his.

"Richard, the love that came to you through this innocent child of mine, can never separate,

its mission is to closer bind. I would not leave you if I could, and could not if I would."

The moonlight streamed into the room and bathed them in a flood of light, as united in the bonds of Friendship, Love, and Truth they stood beside the slumbering child.



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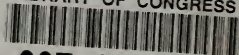
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